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The ULTRA project (The Universities Language Teaching Research Agreement) : a joint investigation by Edith Cowan University, Western Australia and the Guangzhou Foreign Language University, the People's Republic of China, into the use of intensive and immersion approaches to language teaching and learning at university level

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THE CENTRE FOR APPLIED LANGUAGE RESEARCH
EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

THE ULTRA PROJECT

(The Universities Language Teaching Research Agreement)

A joint investigation by Edith Cowan University, Western Australia and the Guangzhou Foreign Language University, the People's Republic of China, into

THE USE OF INTENSIVE AND IMMERSION APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL



Alastair L. McGregor

and

Ian G. Malcolm

This project was carried out with the assistance of a grant provided by the Department of Employment, Education and Training through the Targeted Institutional Links Programme

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Dr Marjorie Wesche	University of Ottawa
Dr Steven Sternfeld	University of Utah
Dr Zhu Yingain	University of Utah (at that time)
Dr Andrew Lian	James Cook University, Townsville
Dr Joseph Hung Hin Wai	Chinese University of Hong Kong

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Alastair McGregor

Coordinator

RATIONALE

The DEET Discipline Review on Modern Languages in Higher Education was completed in February 1991, its findings being set out in the report *Widening our Horizons*, or the Leal Report. Among the findings of the Review were three related facts:

1. The teaching of modern languages in higher education is under-researched, especially (though not only) in Australia. Among the factors responsible for this are the dominance, within university language departments, of literary research, the tendency of universities to employ instructors or part time tutors rather than research-oriented academics to teach languages, and the prevalence of territorial disputes which would preclude language teachers from researching "teaching" if they are not in education faculties.
2. The teaching of modern languages in higher education appears to take little advantage of intensive approaches in degree courses, though these have been used with apparent success in specialist institutions and overseas. The Review quotes a submission from Melbourne University which argues as follows:

Proponents of such (ie intensive) courses argue that they allow mature students to make rapid progress in the language, develop motivation and esprit de corps in the class leading to lower attrition rates, provide a clear route for accelerated learning, effectively compressing two years' study of the language into one, and provide a much needed link for high school graduates who have not completed enough language to proceed directly to first year levels of post-HSC standard.

Some language teachers in the University argue that whatever the advantages of an intensive course in the short term, retention of the language in the longer term may be less high than for conventional extended courses. Others argue that a summer intensive course in Chinese or Japanese cannot reach equivalence with an extended course over a year in which one of the objectives is the assimilation of a large number of written characters.

These differences should be susceptible to independent testing.
(Melbourne University submission, pp 6-7).

(from Leal, Bettoni and Malcolm (1991) *Widening our Horizons* pp 100-101)

In fact, as the review points out, research data, even from overseas, are inadequate to enable any confident generalisations to be made about if, how and why language learning can be more effective in intensive than in non-intensive courses.

3. The People's Republic of China is in virtually the reverse situation to Australia, since the mode on which its higher education language programmes has been set up is one which depends in many instances on intensive approaches,

involving 20 or more hours of exposure to the target language per week.

In other words, the experience, and the lack of experience in language teaching approaches in China and Australia complement each other and lend themselves to cooperative study and research.

4. One area of research into language teaching which has been pursued with more success than any others in recent years, especially in Canada (where such scholars as Swain and Cummins are the major authorities) is immersion. While efforts have been made in some Australian universities (notably, Monash, Queensland and Bond) to incorporate immersion techniques into higher education language teaching, actual controlled research of such innovations in higher education has not yet been carried out.

Summing up, then, it can be noted that:

- the need for research into how language can be best taught in higher education is urgent;
- intensive approaches are an area in which joint research with scholars from the People's Republic of China would be particularly productive;
- the most promising area of innovation within the context of intensive or non-intensive language teaching in higher education is that of immersion techniques.

BACKGROUND: The Participating Institutions

With the establishment of Edith Cowan University in 1991, Language studies was identified as an important part of the University's profile. This emphasis has seen the addition to the Department of Language Studies of an Institute of Applied Language Studies and, later, the Centre for Applied Language Research with strong cooperation from the Faculty of Education, Edith Cowan University's commitment in this area being the most substantial in Western Australia.

With language students ranging from those taking certificates to Ph.D students this University can boast a long tradition (from well before its inception as a University) of innovation and leadership in language education with ever increasing enrolments, new subjects and novel approaches. This has been accompanied by the hosting of national and international conferences and numerous publications.

The Guangzhou Foreign Language University is one of the three foremost centres of specialisation in language studies and applied linguistics in the People's Republic of China. Its professional association with Edith Cowan University began in 1984 when one of its staff, Associate Professor Zhu Daomin, while on a sabbatical in Australia, became an honorary consultant on one of its advisory committees in language studies. Subsequently, Dr Ian Malcolm, then Head of the Department of Language Studies, accepted an invitation to spend a year as a Foreign Expert teaching in the Masters programme in Applied Linguistics at Guangzhou Foreign Language University in 1986-87.

In 1987 the President of the Guangzhou Foreign Language University and the Director of the Western Australian College of Advanced Education (now Edith Cowan University) signed a sister institution agreement under terms of which they agreed to exchange two staff per year to teach in their respective language programmes. By the end of 1995, eight staff from Edith Cowan University (ECU) will have spent periods of from one to three semesters at Guangzhou Foreign Language University (GFLU) and eleven staff of GFLU will have spent periods of one year or more at ECU under this agreement. This arrangement has benefited both institutions in that it has brought to ECU a succession of experts to assist in the training of graduate interpreters in Chinese and help with other Chinese courses and at the same time has provided GFLU with a sustained source of highly qualified foreign staff to contribute to its MA programme. The relationship between the institutions has been confirmed through visits to GFLU by senior academic staff of ECU including the Head of the Department of Language Studies, the Head of the Institute of Applied Language Studies and the Vice Chancellor.

Alongside the lecturer exchange programme has developed a Visiting Scholars programme under which since 1987 five academics from GFLU have been enabled to spend periods of one year on research and publications projects at ECU. One of these projects has led to an ongoing joint language materials publishing agreement between GFLU and ECU.

There thus existed an ideal opportunity for research into language teaching approaches across the two Universities and countries.

This suitability was recognised by the Department of Employment Education and Training who assisted with a grant of \$62,070.00 across the three years of the ULTRA project thus providing approximately one third of the total costs involved, the remainder being provided by the University and later by a supplementary grant from CAUT which enabled the original design to be extended in significant directions.

THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Any responsible implementation of a project such as ULTRA requires a preparatory consultation phase, networking with scholars of international repute working in related areas. Before firming up the details of the research plan three sets of researchers were approached to discuss a tentative outline:

1. Unquestionably the primary impetus for work in the immersion approach to language learning has come from Canada, one of the foremost names in literature and research being Dr Merrill Swain of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Dr Swain has described immersion approaches and their results with students from 'beginning' school students through later and secondary beginners. We were therefore most gratified when Dr Swain agreed to come to Edith Cowan University, meet with the proposed research team and examine the outline of the project, making valuable suggestions to strengthen it and avoid potential dangers.

A second participant in this phase was Professor Marjorie Wesche of the University of Ottawa. Dr Wesche's additional input into the project arose from her experience of

implementing programmes at University level. Starting with courses in Psychology such immersion programmes developed to courses in the humanities and social sciences. She provided valuable information on the particular models used at Ottawa, neither being what might be described as 'pure' immersion courses but 'sheltered' or 'adjunct' models where typically there might be preparation in a special class of the language to be used in the course lectures or the ESL/FSL courses might be linked to regular discipline courses for native speakers.

2. A second important group was composed of any researchers who had actually attempted immersion approaches at University level in a 'straight' format, ie employing neither 'sheltered' nor 'adjunct' approaches. At the time of commencing our preparation only one such source of information was available to us. Dr Sternfeld of the University of Utah, had attempted this approach with several languages over quite a number of years. His input was invaluable even though these most promising experiments had been discontinued after several years for financial and administrative reasons. Of particular interest to us was the information he was able to provide on typical (and developing) student reactions to this approach (eg the initial student indignant response that the teacher was not prepared to be more linguistically helpful and the way in which this actually resulted in a binding together of the class members; this fore-knowledge avoided too much dismay on our part when a virtually identical reaction was experienced in the ULTRA classes) He also provided information on staff and departmental reactions experienced.

Even more directly relevant were the insights of Dr Zhu Yongmin who for five years constructed and conducted the Mandarin Chinese classes and programmes at the University of Utah on Chinese culture, geography and history. Of particular significance were his insights into using the approach with beginners in the language with the early emphasis being on listening comprehension over the first year. Dr Zhu had given considerable thought to the avoidance of fossilisation of poor grammar and pronunciation through the use of this approach.

The initial consultations were therefore with those with considerable experience of using immersion techniques for language learning.

3. A third set of researchers to be drawn into the network were those who have been working in closely related areas either as regards subjects or approaches. Typical of these was Dr Joseph Hung Hin Wai of the Chinese University of Hong Kong who for several years has been working in week long English immersion 'camps' with Grade 10 students in the Guangdong Province of the PRC. The main objective here has been to break down perceived 'barriers' to the actual use of English by PRC students through such strategies as working out a protocol for a questionnaire on a particular topic, going round and asking the questions, then computing, collating and presenting the results. There was also small group work involving story telling, poetry and songs - all in English. There was every reason to believe that the barrier to using the language had been effectively broken though long-term outcomes were difficult to establish.

Highly significant was the input of Dr Andrew Lian of the Centre for Language Teaching and Research, University of Queensland who had had extensive experience of applying individualisation and macro-simulation techniques, particularly in the teaching of French. Dr Lian stressed the need for teachers to feel comfortable with the approach and for

students to have the time to 'grow' into their character in the year long macro-simulation. Again warnings were given on the concerns of traditional teachers that 'the syllabus in not being covered'. A third valuable emphasis was on the need for the preparation of teachers for their facilitating (and indeed, technical) roles.

THE PROJECT TEAM

Project teams were set up in both countries to administer the experimental groups where students were to be taught by intensive in comparison with non-intensive approaches, and by immersion in comparison with non-immersion approaches. There was a Chief Researcher and a team of participating teachers in each country, and the project allowed for the Chief Researchers or Coordinators to make reciprocal visits to one another's institutions in connection with the coordination and the writing up of the research.

While it will be more useful to set out the full project and teaching teams in Appendix A the core project teams were set up as follows (though even these had to be modified as the project continued over its three years).

At Edith Cowan University:

Professor Ian Malcolm, Professor of Applied Linguistics;
Dr Toby Metcalfe, Head of the Institute of Applied Language Studies
Dr Ang Tian Se, Head of the Chinese Language Department;
Mr Wolfgang Frick, Department of Language Studies,
Dr Alastair McGregor, Coordinator of Project

At Guangzhou Foreign Language University:

Professor Xiao Huiyun, then Professor of English;
Mr Chen Jian Ping, (then) Deputy Head, Department of English;
Mr Liu Xiang Fu, Department of English;
Mr Cai Yun, Coordinator of Project.

PROJECT DESIGN AND TIME PLAN

Three phases were planned for the ULTRA project :

Phase I, 1992 Intensive v Non-intensive

The teaching and evaluation of a non-intensive Mandarin course (Semester 1 and 2, 1992) at Edith Cowan University.

The Mandarin Intensive course to be offered in Semester 1, 1992.

The English Intensive course to be offered in Semester 1 (ie. September-January) in Guangzhou.

Visit by the ECU coordinator to Guangzhou for the commencement of the teaching phase of the project.

Visit by the Guangzhou coordinator for a six month period to ECU to:

1. Assist with the preparation of Chinese materials for the immersion phase of the project.
2. Prepare English materials for the Guangzhou immersion phase.

This phase of the project was implemented according to plan.

Phase II, 1993 Immersion v Non-immersion

The teaching and evaluation of an immersion Mandarin course (Semesters 1 and 2, 1992) at Edith Cowan University

The teaching and evaluation of the non-immersion (control) group Mandarin course (Semesters 1 and 2, 1992) at Edith Cowan University

The teaching and evaluation of the English immersion course in Semesters 1 and 2 (September 1992 - June 1993) in Guangzhou.

The teaching and evaluation of an English control group course in Semester 1 and 2 (1992/1993) in Guangzhou.

The Edith Cowan University section of this phase was completed as planned. Due to administrative difficulties the Guangzhou implementation of the immersion phase had to be postponed for a year and was not implemented until mid 1994, when it was run in a modified one-semester form.

Phase III 1994

The completion of Phase II in Guangzhou. Analysis and Findings with the submission of the report by December 1994.

Two major amendments were made to this plan:

1. Due to the delay in the experiment in Guangzhou the implementation of the immersion phase could only commence there in mid 1994. Thus the analysis and submission of the report was postponed with the permission of the Department of Employment Education and Training until June 1995.
2. The obtaining of a grant from the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching meant that a major extension to the design could be implemented at Edith Cowan University. Since numbers in the 1993 immersion trial had been small a three way comparison was planned and implemented in 1994:
 - Control Group: Semester 1 and 2, 1994
 - Immersion Group: Semester 1 and 2, 1994
 - Intensive Immersion Group: Semester 1, 1994

PHASE I INTENSIVE v NON INTENSIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

I.1 BACKGROUND

According to Benseler and Schulz (1979), intensive language teaching is not a new development. It has been talked about in the language teaching profession since 1919 at least. They also point out that it has not been clearly defined:

The term can refer to any course that involves students in a structured learning situation for more than the otherwise normal one classroom period per day. Courses range from total summer immersion programs... to intensive summer of academic year courses with up to 40 hours of classroom instruction per week... to intensive January interim courses... to intensive Saturday courses meeting for six hours of instruction once a week during the semester... The concept presupposes no particular methodology, linguistic theory, special materials, or facilities (Benseler and Schulz, 1979:9).

It is noteworthy that the term "intensive" is sometimes used to refer to immersion programmes. However, there is no necessary reason why they should be so identified; Intensive does not imply immersion and immersion does not imply intensive. The essential distinguishing feature of intensive courses is the compression of the programmes into a shorter time period. Often, though not invariably, intensive courses are short courses.

It is not uncommon for intensive courses to be associated with higher education. For example, a national survey carried out in the United States in 1977 found that some 50% of 4-year institutions responding to the survey made available some kind of intensive instruction (Benseler and Schulz, 1979:8). In Australia, intensive instruction courses are often offered by University Extension departments. They represent a reaction to what has been described as the "drip feed" approach (Hawkins, 1988), which has been found to be demotivating because of the slow progress it offers students. University degree courses however are generally under constraints to follow timetabling patterns which favour the compatibility of language units with studies in other disciplines. The norm is therefore non-intensive: about 5 classes of 45 - 60 minutes per week. Some universities will allow credit within a degree course for language learning carried out in intensive summer courses. However, there is some resistance to the acceptance of such courses as a part of academic programmes.

Although there is no intensive methodology as such, intensive courses must counteract student fatigue and may do this in similar ways, eg., by regularly changing instructors and student groupings, employing small groups and predominantly oral approaches, incorporating language laboratory practice and the use of a range of instructional media and providing some extra-curricular activities in real-life contexts (Benseler and Schulz).

I.2 IMPLEMENTATION: TEACHING CHINESE AT EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

The non-intensive course was conducted over two semesters (30 weeks) with two four hour classes per week. 17 students were finally accepted for the course, of whom 12 completed to the final examination. A group of two teachers taught this course. This class was in fact the normal first year university class.

The intensive class was conducted over one semester with four four-hour classes per week. 19 students were finally accepted for the course, of whom 13 completed the final examination. A group of three teachers taught this course.

The syllabus followed, together with the final examinations, both oral and written, were identical for each course, the final examinations being conducted jointly by teachers from both courses.

The two groups were comparable in academic standard (all being eligible for University entrance). The non-intensive group had about 50% of the group with some facility in a Chinese language (not Mandarin), while the intensive group had only one such entrant.

Teachers of both groups consulted at regular meetings during the year to ensure that structure and teaching for the two groups was kept on parallel lines.

(For the teaching team see appendix A)

I.2.1 Analysis of Results

The following is a summary of the results of the two-sample T-tests carried out to ascertain whether significant differences in results existed between the two groups. These tests were carried out on the results of the common oral test, written test, combined oral plus written and overall results. This last result included class tests not common to the two groups due to differences in time taken for the course.

COMPARING THE ORAL EXAM MEASURES				
	N	MEAN	STDEV	SE MEAN
INTENSIVE ORAL	13	72.31	8.39	2.3
NON-INTENSIVE ORAL	12	66.67	8.88	2.6
95 PCT CI FOR MU INTENSIVE ORAL - MU NON-INTENSIVE ORAL: (-1.5, 12.8)				
TTEST MU INTENSIVE ORAL = MU NON-INTENSIVE ORAL (VS NE): T= 1.63 P= 0.12 DF= 23				
POOLED STDEV =		8.63		

COMPARING THE WRITTEN EXAM MEASURES				
	N	MEAN	STDEV	SE MEAN
INTENSIVE WRITTEN	13	65.5	23.3	6.5
NON-INTENSIVE WRITTEN	12	60.6	10.5	3.0
95 PCT CI FOR MU INTENSIVE WRITTEN - MU NON-INTENSIVE WRITTEN: (-10.3, 20.1)				
TTEST MU INTENSIVE WRITTEN = MU NON-INTENSIVE WRITTEN (VS NE): T= 0.66 P= 0.51 DF= 23				
POOLED STDEV =		18.4		

COMPARING THE WRITTEN + ORAL EXAM MEASURES

	<u>N</u>	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>STDEV</u>	<u>SE MEAN</u>
INTENSIVE WRITTEN + ORAL	13	26.92	7.54	2.1
NON-INTENSIVE WRITTEN + ORAL	12	24.83	3.76	1.1

95 PCT CI FOR MU INTENSIVE WRITTEN + ORAL - MU NON-INTENSIVE WRITTEN + ORAL:
(-2.9, 7.1)

TTEST MU INTENSIVE WRITTEN + ORAL = MU NON-INTENSIVE WRITTEN + ORAL (VS NE):
T= 0.86 P= 0.40 DF= 23

POOLED STDEV = 6.04

COMPARING OVERALL RESULTS (INCLUDING CLASS WORKERS)

	<u>N</u>	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>STDEV</u>	<u>SE MEAN</u>
INTENSIVE OVERALL	13	75.0	14.9	4.1
NON-INTENSIVE OVERALL	12	66.00	9.53	2.8

96 PCT CI FOR MU INTENSIVE OVERALL - MU NON-INTENSIVE OVERALL:
(-1.4, 19.4)

TTEST MU INTENSIVE OVERALL = MU NON-INTENSIVE OVERALL (VS NE):
T= 1.78 P= 0.088 DF= 23

POOLED STDEV = 12.6

It is clear that results are not significantly different for the two groups though there is a consistent trend in favour of the intensive group. The result closest to significance - the overall measure -, while interesting, cannot be taken as of major importance in view of the differences in internal assignments for each group.

I 2.2 Teachers' Comments

However, a closer examination of the results in connection with class records combined with discussions with the teachers highlighted a particular set of circumstances which had arisen with the 'intensive' group. There was a variety of reasons for withdrawals from the intensive class; one student moved to another part of the country, another obtained a new post which required his full-time attention, etc. However there was a group of four who, before the course was a third completed, indicated that they were finding the intensive programme unsuitable for their learning style. They felt from the start that they could not keep up with the other students and that their "falling behind" had a serious cumulative effect due to the intensity of the learning procedures, and indeed that they were acting as a hindrance to the other students.

At this stage considerable pressure was put on these class members to remain in the class. They were reminded that they had been clearly informed about the intensity of the instruction and had committed themselves to remaining in the group till the end of the course. They were also reminded that the course had (except for a very small administrative fee) been provided completely free.

In spite of this provision two of the four withdrew saying that the pace was altogether too much for them. The other two, however, yielded to the pressure (almost amounting to 'verbal blackmail!') and continued attending the classes, generally falling further and further behind though every effort was made to avoid discouraging them. However, in the final examination (oral and written) their results were very much below the results of virtually everybody else in the class.

I.2.3 Re-analysis

The two sample-T-tests were therefore carried out again taking these two students out of the 'intensive' group. The following are the results :

(Intensive n = 11 Non-Intensive n = 12)

COMPARING THE ORAL EXAM MEASURES

	N	MEAN	STDEV	SE MEAN
INTENSIVE ORAL	11	73.18	8.23	2.5
NON-INTENSIVE ORAL	12	66.67	8.88	2.6

95 PCT CI FOR MU INTENSIVE ORAL - MU NON-INTENSIVE ORAL:
(-0.9, 14.0)

TTEST MU INTENSIVE ORAL = MU NON-INTENSIVE ORAL (VS NE):
T= 1.82 P= 0.083 DF= 21

POOLED STDEV = 8.58

COMPARING THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION MEASURES

	N	MEAN	STDEV	SE MEAN
INTENSIVE WRITTEN	11	72.6	16.9	5.1
NON-INTENSIVE WRITTEN	12	60.6	10.5	3.0

95 PCT CI FOR MU INTENSIVE WRITTEN - MU NON-INTENSIVE WRITTEN:
(-0.0, 24.1)

TTEST MU INTENSIVE WRITTEN = MU NON-INTENSIVE WRITTEN (VS NE):
T= 2.07 P= 0.051 DF= 21

POOLED STDEV = 13.9

COMPARING THE WRITTEN + ORAL EXAMINATION MEASURES

	N	MEAN	STDEV	SE MEAN
INTENSIVE ORAL + WRITTEN	11	29.18	5.74	1.7
NON-INTENSIVE ORAL + WRITTEN	12	24.83	3.76	1.1

95 PCT CI FOR MU INTENSIVE ORAL + WRITTEN - MU NON-INTENSIVE ORAL + WRITTEN:
(0.2, 8.5)

TTEST MU INTENSIVE ORAL + WRITTEN = MU NON-INTENSIVE ORAL + WRITTEN (VS NE):
T= 2.17 P= 0.042 DF= 21

POOLED STDEV = 4.81

COMPARING OVERALL RESULTS (INCLUDING CLASS WORK)

	N	MEAN	STDEV	SE MEAN
INTENSIVE OVERALL	11	79.1	11.7	3.5
NON-INTENSIVE OVERALL	12	66.00	9.53	2.8
95 PCT CI FOR MU INTENSIVE OVERALL - MU NON-INTENSIVE OVERALL: (3.9, 22.3)				
TTEST MU INTENSIVE OVERALL = MU NON-INTENSIVE OVERALL (VS NE): T= 2.95 P= 0.0076 DF= 21				
POOLED STDEV =		10.6		

I.2.4 Discussion

It is now clear that of the three identical measures (Oral Exam, Written Exam and Combined Examination mark) two of the three tests show a statistically significant difference in results in favour of the intensive group. Two points would appear to arise quite clearly:

1. While the levels of significance are not high (reaching only the lowest normally accepted levels of significance) these may nonetheless be taken as fairly clear results in view of the lack of tight experimental conditions, eg. it was impossible to match the two samples exactly. Indeed it could be suggested that the larger proportion with some Chinese language background in the non-intensive group could have been expected to give that group some advantage - though this cannot be proved; indeed the opposite could be argued from an 'interference' angle.
2. The most obvious deduction, however, would be that for any possible number (or combination) of reasons concerning personality, learning styles or life situation some people may simply be unsuited to 'intensive' work. Hindsight would suggest that we should have allowed those who felt they would like to withdraw to do so. It could be suggested that if this had happened and the attention subsequently devoted to them had been given instead to the other eleven the differences in results could have been even more significant.
3. A third deduction deserving further examination could be that 'intensity' of instruction has less effect on oral progress than on other areas of language learning.

As a general comment however, it must be re-emphasised that 'intensive' is used in a purely comparative sense. *What is an 'intensive' course?* Courses have occasionally reached levels of 60 or even 80 hours per week. In the course of the present trial the 'intensive' course was merely 16 hours per week as against 8 for the non-intensive course. *Does intensity become more or less effective at higher or lower levels?* Further investigation was required and in this connection the investigation into teaching English in China at the Guangzhou Foreign Language University gave us some indication of findings at the 'lower' end of intensity.

I.3 TEACHING ENGLISH AT GUANGZHOU FOREIGN LANGUAGE UNIVERSITY

I.3.1 The Subjects

The Intensive group was the third-year Spanish class of 14 students. Since one of them did not take the first TOEFL test, he was excluded from the statistics. The Non-Intensive group was the third-year French class of 14 students. These two groups of students had a very similar history of English learning. All of them had received English training as a compulsory subject in the middle school, were enrolled into the Western Languages Department of this University in 1990 on the same standard and started the English course in the third year of study as the compulsory second foreign language course. Their majors were similar: Spanish and French; and the other subjects were the same. They all lived on the campus with the same conditions for learning. The first TOEFL test showed that their starting English levels were very close, thus providing a fair basis for the comparison.

I.3.2 Summary of Structure

The intensity of teaching was relative. In this experiment the intensive group had 8 hours per week and the Non-Intensive group had 4 hours. The Intensive group completed the course within one semester of 17 weeks (from August 31, 1992 to December 24, 1992), the Non-Intensive group within two semesters of 37 weeks (the second semester was from February 8 to June 28, 1993). Between the two semesters there was a winter vacation.

The course book used was Book I of CECL (Communicative English for Chinese Learners) compiled by Prof Li Xiaojun and her group of GFLU teachers and British experts. This is an integrated course following the communicative approach. The two groups were taught by the same teacher with the same procedures and the same number of exercises and homework, though it should be noted that the first semester (ie the semester which included the whole of the Intensive course) was cut short by two weeks.

I.3.3 Measuring Instruments

Both at the beginning and end of the course the subjects took a TOEFL test. The TOEFL test was used because it is widely accepted as a well-established measure of overall EFL proficiency. With its established reliability it could well measure the extent of improvement and, with its high capability for discrimination, it can be taken by people with various levels of proficiency without being too difficult for even beginners. The two TOEFL Writing papers were both double-marked. The subjects also took the CECL (ie the internal achievement test for the course) in the middle and at the end of the course. The purpose of using the CECL test was to measure the subjects' achievement in the course taught. In addition, the CECL test contained more elements of language use.

An oral test was also administered at the beginning and end of the experiment to measure the subjects' speaking skill. But the two tests were different so that they could suit their level of proficiency. The first one was an interview on their own background while the second one consisted of two parts: pair work and story-telling. The oral tests were marked by the teacher in charge of this course.

I.3.4

Analysis of Results

For purposes of analysis the following pre and post test scores for both groups were considered:

1. The totals of the achievement (CECL) scores
2. The totals of the proficiency (TOEFL) scores
3. The oral scores carried out for proficiency testing.

Numbers were: Intensive class = 13 Non-intensive class = 14

Since the main question facing the researchers was whether there were any significantly different outcomes as the result of the two treatments the obvious statistical measurement to apply would be Analysis of Co-variance for the two groups. The following tables summarise these results:

*Analysis of Variance for the Achievement Test (CECL) Post Test 1.
by Group with the Achievement Test (CECL) Pretest as co-variate.*

UNIQUE sums of squares
All effects entered simultaneously

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig of F
Covariates	3634.572	1	3634.572	30.223	.000
APRE	3634.572	1	3634.572	30.223	.000
Main Effects	639.598	1	639.598	5.318	.030
Group	639.598	1	639.598	5.318	.030
Explained	4701.281	2	2350.641	19.546	.000
Residual	2886.237	24	120.260		
Total	7587.519	26	291.828		

27 cases were processed
0 cases (.0 pct) were missing

*Analysis of Variance for the Proficiency Test (TOEFL) Post Test Total Scores 2 .
by Group with the Proficiency Test (TOEFL) Pretest
Total Scores as co-variates.*

UNIQUE sums of squares
All effects entered simultaneously

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig of F
Covariates	24126.204	1	24126.204	27.665	.000
PTPRE	24126.204	1	24126.204	27.665	.000
Main Effects	820.420	1	820.420	.941	.342
GROUP	820.420	1	820.420	.941	.342
Explained	24966.461	2	12483.230	14.314	.000
Residual	20930.280	24	872.095		
Total	45896.741	26	1765.259		

27 cases were processed
0 cases (.0 pct) were missing

*Analysis of Variance for the Proficiency Oral Test Post Test 3
by Group with the Proficiency Oral Pretest as co-variate.*

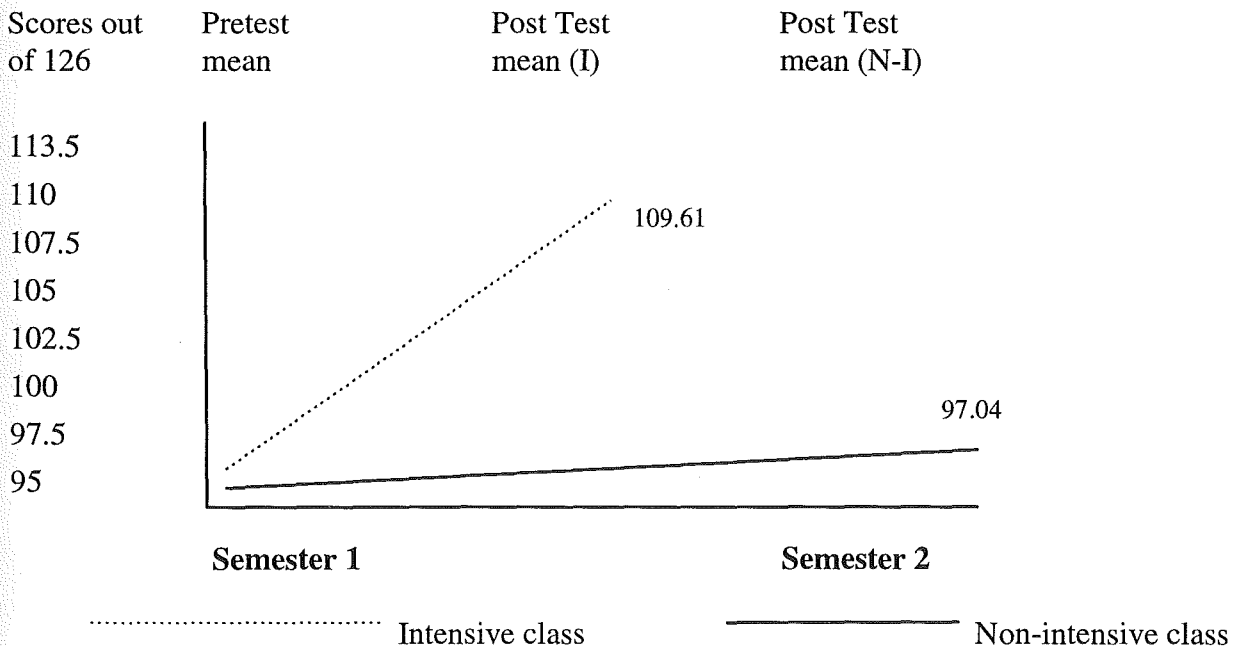
UNIQUE sums of squares
All effects entered simultaneously

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig of F
Covariates	13.629	1	13.629	4.359	.048
POPRE	13.629	1	13.629	4.359	.048
Main Effects	2.337	1	2.337	.747	.396
GROUP	2.337	1	2.337	.747	.396
Explained	20.259	2	10.129	3.240	.057
Residual	75.038	24	3.127		
Total	95.296	26	3.665		

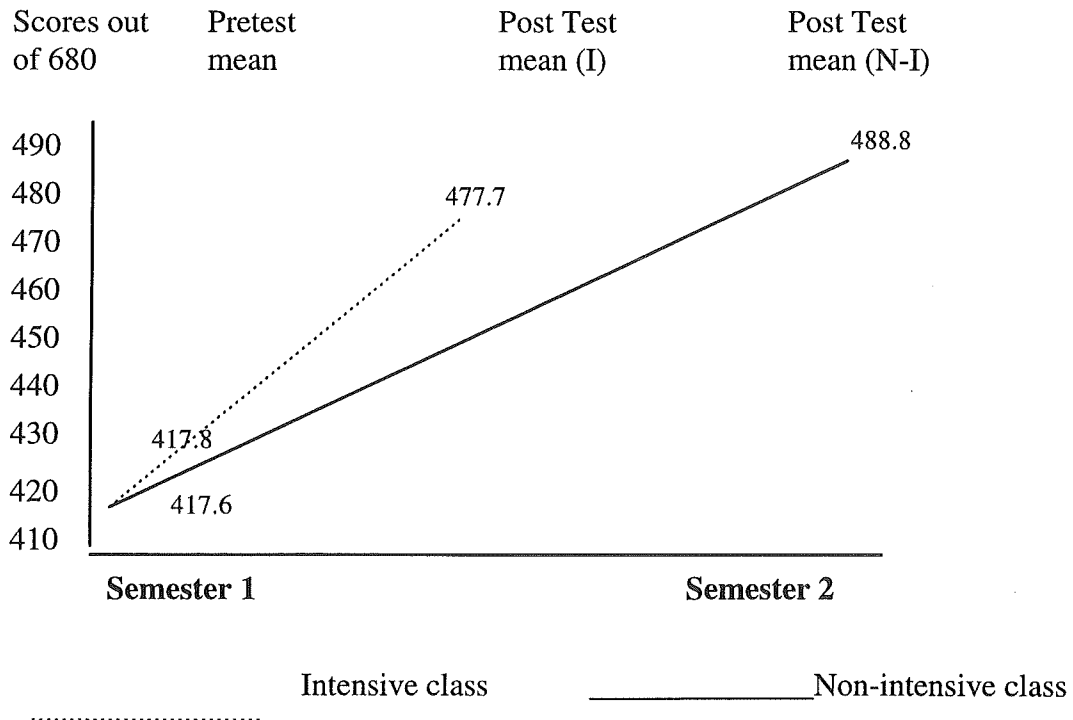
27 cases were processed
0 cases (.0 pct) were missing

It will immediately be seen that in the figures for the Achievement Test (CECL) there is a significant difference in favour of the Intensive class at a .03 level of significance. There is no significant difference using the other two measures. These results may be demonstrated diagrammatically by the following graphs:

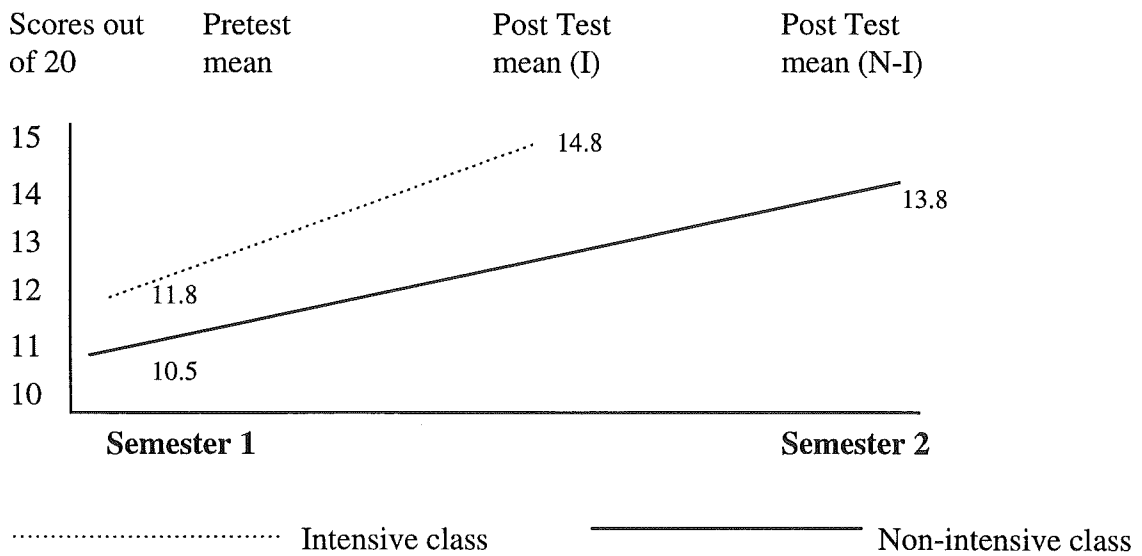
ACHIEVEMENT TEST (CECL)



PROFICIENCY TEST (TOTAL) TOEFL



PROFICIENCY TEST (ORAL)



While these are the most important figures for purposes of the experiment, it was considered worth checking by means of straight forward t-tests whether there was for each group separately a significant improvement in the pre and post test score on each of the measures.

Group: Intensive
t-tests for paired samples

ACHIEVEMENT TEST (CECL)

Variable	Number of pairs	Corr	2-tail Sig	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
APRE				97.5769	6.598	1.830
	13	.895	.000			
APOST				109.6154	11.100	3.079

Paired Differences

Mean	SD	SE of Mean	t-value	df	2-tail Sig
-12.0385	5.974	1.657	-7.27	12	.000
95% CI (-15.649, -8.428)					

PROFICIENCY TEST (TOEFL)

Variable	Number of pairs	Corr	2-tail Sig	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
PTPRE				417.6154	29.815	8.269
	13	.638	.019			
PTPOST				477.6923	35.689	9.898

Paired Differences

Mean	SD	Se of Mean	t-value	df	2-tail Sig
-60.0769	28.368	7.868	-7.64	12	.000
95% CI (-77.224, -42.930)					

ORAL TEST

Variable	Number of pairs	Corr	2-tail Sig	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
POPRE				11.8462	1.819	.504
	13	.540	0.57			
POPST				14.8846	2.142	.594

Paired Differences

Mean	SD	SE of Mean	t-value	df	2-tail Sig
-3.0385	1.920	.532	-5.71	12	.000
95% CI (-4.199, -1.878)					

Group: *Non-intensive*

t-test for paired samples

ACHIEVEMENT TEST (CECL)

Variable	Number of pairs	Corr	2-tail Sig	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
APRE	14	.713	.004	96.0714	6.513	1.741
APOST				97.0357	19.694	5.264

Paired Differences

Mean	SD	Se of Mean	t-value	df	2-tail Sig
-.9643	15.727	4.203	-.23	13	.822
95% CI (-10.047, 8.118)					

PROFICIENCY TEST (TOEFL)

Variable	Number of pairs	Corr	2-tail Sig	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
PTPRE	14	.776	.001	417.7857	47.370	12.660
PTPOST				488.8571	47.855	12.790

Paired Differences

Mean	SD	Se of Mean	t-value	df	2-tail Sig
-71.0714	31.905	8.527	-8.33	13	.000
95% CI (-89.497, -52.645)					

ORAL TEST

Variable	Number of pairs	Corr	2-tail Sig	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
POPPE	14	.345	.227	10.5000	3.156	.844
POPOST				13.8929	1.607	.430

Paired Differences

Mean	SD	SE of Mean	t-value	df	2-tail Sig
-3.3929	3.008	.804	-4.22	13	.001
95% CI (-5.130, -1.656)					

I.3.5

Discussion

Two points stand out clearly from these results (which arise from groups that, by pretest results, their situation in the University and the observation of the lecturer concerned are believed to have been fairly closely matched):

1. As might be expected after a year's (or equivalent of a year) course virtually all the t-test measures show a significant improvement for each group, generally at very high levels of significance.

However there is one very obvious exception to this. Using the achievement (CECL) measurement the Non-intensive group failed to make much improvement at all. After making every allowance for the possibly better effects of intensive as against non-intensive treatment this remains somewhat of a puzzle and any comments can only be in the nature of suggestions.

It is possible that with the passage of time the level of motivation for the Non-intensive group went down, particularly as they were aware that the Intensive group had finished the course. From student feedback it is known that the Non-intensive group felt that they would also have liked to be doing the course intensively.

2. This, of course, is not unconnected with the clear result in favour of intensive teaching when measured by the achievement (CECL) scores in the test of (co) variance.

It should be noted that this is perhaps even clearer than appears at first sight in view of the fact that, unfortunately, due to internal University circumstances, the first semester of the 1992/93 academic year ie. the period covering the entire intensive course and the first 'half' of the Non-intensive course was cut short by two teaching weeks. This means, in fact, that the Intensive class had eight hours less tuition than the Non-intensive in total.

PHASE II IMMERSION LANGUAGE TEACHING

Unlike intensive language teaching, immersion has been carefully defined and extensively researched. Essentially, it involves students in employing the target language as the medium of instruction in other areas, and the teacher in using only the target language in the classroom. Immersion is a form of bilingual education where the classroom itself provides a naturalistic setting for second language acquisition (Swain and Lapkin, 1982).

French immersion in Canada began in 1965 as a parent-initiated experiment, and now involves more than a quarter of a million students per year from all the Canadian provinces (Harley, 1991:10). Since it is the best documented model of immersion, it provided a major input to the ULTRA project.

While there is no one model of immersion (Swain, 1980:31), there is a significant difference between immersion and some other language programmes. Cummins and Swain have, in particular, distinguished immersion from submersion. The latter brings together children who can and who cannot function in the school language and gives them all instruction by medium of that language. Immersion, on the other hand, entails bringing together children who are alike in possessing no prior knowledge of the school language and provides them with instruction by means of that language (Cummins and Swain, 1986:8).

It is possible to distinguish seven different types of immersion programme, the first three occurring in Canada at school level and the other four at tertiary or adult level. In early total immersion, children coming to school have their first few years of schooling in a totally target-language (French) environment. The teacher will only speak in the target language, but will understand the children's home language (English) and will respond to it when they use it. From year 2 or 3 English will be introduced for language arts, and the amount of instructional time in English will be progressively increased until by year 6 it is 50%. When the students enter secondary school, they may elect to continue some of their studies by medium of French (Swain, 1991). In middle immersion (Harley, 1991), students commence from 50% - 100% immersion studies in French for year 4 or 5 and continue through primary school, and again have the option of continuing some of their studies by medium of French in the secondary school. Late immersion commences around the age of 11 - 13 and is preceded by at least a year of study of French as a second language. Studies may be 80% by medium of French and may be followed up in secondary school (Swain, 1991; Harley, 1991). Research has shown that immersion learners compare very favourably with French as a second language learners in terms of their French language skills, that they learn subject matter just as well as those learning by medium of English, and that, once they are past an initial threshold level, their English language skills are as good as, or better than, those of children learning by medium of English. It has also been found that children of non-English speaking background can successfully participate in French immersion programmes, and that their learning seems to be supported by the bilingual skills they already possess (Bild and Swain, 1989). This is especially the case where they are literate in their mother tongue (Swain, 1991).

A fourth type of immersion programme has been undertaken at university level in Canada and is called a "sheltered programme". The name comes from the fact that it involves teaching a full University unit by medium of French to students who are learning the language as well as the subject matter and who therefore need some language learning support. In the University

of Ottawa Sheltered Program, an introductory course in psychology is taught by medium of French to students who enter the course with intermediate proficiency in French. The students sign a contract committing them to do all the course reading in French and to attend at least 80% of classes. There are two lecture sessions a week, each of one and a half hours, of which the first 15-20 minutes is taught by a language teacher and the remainder by the French-speaking psychology professor. The language teaching component is basically French as a second language, and involves language support directed to the topics being treated, as well as instruction on how to interrupt or request restatement by the lecturer. The unit is only 39 hours long, but course evaluation has shown that students taking it have significantly improved their French and achieved comparable learning of psychology to that achieved by students learning in English as L1. The sheltered programmes are a radical attempt at translating into the tertiary sphere the integrative approach to language and content learning which has been widely advocated at secondary level (as in eg Mohan, 1986). They differ from late immersion programmes in that they require a greater amount of prior background in French as a second language and they continue to incorporate a component of French as a second language.

More common in universities is the fifth type of programme; the summer course. One large scale summer programme in Canada is the Summer Language Bursary Program which has been funded by the Canadian government as part of its policy in encouraging students to become bilingual. It is a 6-week immersion programme offered to post-secondary students wishing to study French or English as L2 (Kaufman, Shapson and Day, 1982). More than 40 institutions have been accredited to conduct such programmes, but they tend to follow a common pattern of intensive formal language instruction in the morning and socio-cultural activities in the afternoon and evening. Students must reside in a target-language speaking residence or private home and are expected to use the language extensively out of class. Evaluation has shown that language gains from these courses have been significant, and have been sustained eight months after the conclusion of the programme. Positive side-effects have included reduced student anxiety in speaking the target language and increased student perception of understanding of the target culture (Kaufman, Shapson and Day, 1982).

A summer course conducted successfully over several years by the State University Of New York has been described by Urbanski (1984). This involved a 50 hour programme, 5 hours a day, 5 days a week, over two weeks in the summer, with follow-up weekend sessions of 15 hours in June and November. The programme was open to anyone, though for many it led on to more formal university language study. Instruction focused on conversational ability in practical situations and was supported by "foreign films, music, singing and dancing, and 'ethnic' dinner and various sports activities, all in the respective languages" (Urbanski, 1984:103). Students were encouraged to live on campus in a language dormitory, to take meals with their instructors (the class size was 12 or less) and to make contact with foreign students on campus.

The University of Indiana runs a 10 week summer programme which attracts students from 48 states of the U.S. and from overseas. The students pay \$2,500 (Indiana undergraduates have \$200 reduction) and sign a pledge to speak the language as much as possible. They study according to a "flex curriculum" where they enrol in one of 4 levels of classes for 4 subjects: listening, writing, speaking and reading. (Oberlander, 1989).

A sixth way of employing immersion is by means of an adjunct programme, where an experience of total immersion is linked to a non-immersion course. Evans (1991) has described a bilingual teacher training programme which incorporates a component of immersion, whereby the student teachers spend a weekend off campus, where they and native speaking facilitators are the only people present, and where they carry out cultural activities, collaborative planning, group work, indoor and outdoor activities, all by medium of the target language (1991). Here the immersion experience is, as it were, an adjunct to a non-immersion course. Swain has referred to an adjunct model where the non-immersion language course is an adjunct to a linked immersion content course and where assignments of the courses are mutually co-ordinated.

The seventh way of employing immersion offered at university level may be termed "pure" immersion employing very much the same strategies as with primary school beginners. As long ago as 1988 Stephen Sternfeld argued

that a "general" second-language class could be bypassed in favour of immediate immersion into subject-matter learning provided that two conditions are met: 1) Expectations with regard to initial production and comprehension must be adjusted downwards, and 2) Programs must incorporate compensatory pedagogical strategies similar to those found in Early Immersion (eg initial focus on comprehension, allowing production to 'emerge' gradually) and in the Ottawa experiment (prior knowledge of course format and subject matter, instruction in classroom-specific language, modified written assignments). By lowering initial expectations and introducing appropriate pedagogical adjustments, a "college immersion" program would allow students to develop their language skills while studying subject-matter appropriate for university-level courses. (Sternfeld, 1988)

Such programmes were in fact implemented by Sternfeld and his colleagues at the University of Utah at first and second year levels in Spanish, French, German, Chinese, Italian and Japanese with a variety of subject matter such as the geography, history and culture of the countries concerned. Despite the promising outcomes of these projects the programme was discontinued after several years for administrative and financial reasons (Sternfeld, 1982).

On the basis of inference from studies of LOTE immersion in higher education Malcolm (1992), argues that eight prerequisites should be met if immersion programmes in higher education are to be successful:

1. A common beginning level for students.
2. The bilingual programme in which immersion is included should be 'additive' rather than 'subtractive'.
3. Only the target language should be used.
4. If not at beginning level the immersion programme should be preceded by a programme of second language instruction.
5. Teachers should not mix languages - the separation approach.

6. Input should be comprehensible.
7. Output should be comprehensible.
8. The problem of functionally reduced output (characteristic of classroom activities) should be taken into account.

It is clear that university courses using the term "immersion" may be divided into those which regard "immersion" simply as an experience of 100% target language use and those which follow the principle stated by Swain, that "substantive academic content is taught using the medium of the student's second language" (Swain, forthcoming:1). If immersion is being adopted in the hope that some of the spectacular student gains reported at the school level may be reproduced at the University level, then it would seem that it ought to be guided by a number of principles which have come out of the research based on the Canadian school programmes.

II.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF AN IMMERSION LANGUAGE COURSE (STAGE 1) AT EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

II.1.1 Selection of Candidates

After considerable discussion by the project team it was decided to carry out this phase of the experiment at third year (or equivalent) level. In a sense the decision was to a large degree made for the team by the nature of the applicants who responded to the advertisement offering an immersion course. While the course was advertised at second year level the great majority of those who applied were at third year level.

A pre-course proficiency test was administered to all applicants as well as to the internal non-intensive third year students of the ECU Chinese major streams who were to be used as the control group. The test was identical for both groups.

A total of 19 of the applicants were then offered places in the immersion course. At the first meeting of the class the nature of the course and procedures were carefully explained and it was agreed that final registration and commitments would be made at the end of the second week of the course. Eight students were registered for the internal non-intensive third year class. At the end of the preliminary period twelve students were registered for the immersion class. Of these one student withdrew for business reasons during first semester. Internal and immersion classes both ran as two three-hour classes per week

However in the second half the numbers in the immersion class dropped and finished at seven. The reasons for the drop-out were varied. One business man was transferred to another city; another participant returned to Japan. At least one and possibly two found the immersion approach difficult and felt they were dropping behind the others in their progress. However it is to be noted that at

least two of whom this might also have been true did not drop out of the course. Perhaps more significantly the internal third year 'control' course also dropped from 8 students to 5 on completion. It could be taken, therefore, that the drop out rate was not a result of the approach being adopted but rather depended on matters such as content and linguistic difficulties common to both courses and the subject area or extraneous factors.

With numbers at such low levels in both the immersion and control groups this stage of the project would best be described as a pilot study, though, as funded by the Targeted Institutional Links funds it should have formed the final stage of the Edith Cowan University side of the ULTRA project.

II.1.2 Course Content and Methodology

The course was on Chinese Cultural History and was being conducted entirely in Mandarin. The only exception to this was the use of an occasional vocabulary list for highly unfamiliar topics. The topic list for the one year course is as follows:

CHINESE IMMERSION PROGRAMME

1. General introduction
2. A brief look at Chinese history
3. A brief look at Chinese geography
4. Chinese people
 - family life/Chinese marriage law
 - women/equality
 - children/one child policy
 - language and dialects
5. Society
 - education
 - employment/wages and bonus system
 - welfare system
6. Customs
 - festivals
 - traditions
 - food

All four skills were included though in the first phase the emphasis was on the receptive skills. No set text was used but relevant passages and chapters were photocopied with close study of certain sections. Question and answer, group discussions, videos, visiting lecturers/presenters, and films were used, the class moving on to extensions such as role playing and simulations in the second semester.

While it was agreed that a small percentage of the time (up to a maximum of 20%) could be directed to language analysis, this did not happen (or prove necessary).

II.1.3 Staffing of the Courses

Both courses were taught by native speakers of Chinese. In the immersion course one of the two lecturers was a visiting scholar from the Guangzhou Foreign Language University. The other lecturer taught both in the internal and immersion courses, which was considered an advantage for purposes of comparison and evaluation.

In Semester 2 the Guangzhou lecturer was replaced by another lecturer from that university. The new lecturer was the staff member who had been responsible for the intensive/non-intensive classes in Guangzhou.

II.1.4 Evaluation

Four forms of evaluation were carried out in addition to the pre/post course proficiency test common to both internal and immersion students:

- (a) Mid and end of semester content tests of multiple choice and short answer construction. Their responses were also looked at from a language point of view by the lecturers though no marks were given to the students on this aspect except in so far as it affected their answers on content.
- (b) Early, mid and end of semester submission of journals by the students, detailing their experiences in and perceptions of the classes.
- (c) Discussion meetings between the Project Team and class members. (The Project team after discussion decided it was inevitable that the groups would, and desirable that they should, know the nature of the research being carried out in broad terms).
- (d) Perceptions of the course lecturers supplied to project team meetings.

II.2 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

(a) *Statistical analysis*

Mid and end of course content tests showed significant gains for all students of the immersion course. This cannot be taken as being in any way remarkable in that the beginning point in knowledge of content was zero or very close to zero on the topic under study. Of the eight students who completed the immersion course three were awarded Distinction passes, one a Credit, two Passes and one Satisfactory.

Since the content areas of the internal and immersion courses were, by the design of the experiment, completely different with the immersion course concentrating on content while the internal course concentrated to a much more significant degree on language there could be no direct comparison between the courses through the students' achievement scores. The important data were the pre and post-test proficiency scores. These were conducted in written and oral modes and were identical for both sets of students, pre and post tests also being identical. ie. repeat tests.

The small sample numbers did not allow for the application of t-tests. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was therefore applied giving the following two-sided probabilities:

1.	Internal Written Pretest v Internal Written Post Test	0.50
2.	Internal Oral Pretest v Internal Oral Post Test	0.69
3.	Immersion Written Pretest v Immersion Written Post Test	0.03
4.	Immersion Oral Pretest v Immersion Oral Post Test	0.40

There was therefore a clear indication in favour of the immersion course in improvement in written proficiency. In view of the small numbers involved no great stress could be placed on this but it was an indication to be checked through the further trialing 1994 and through the English phase of the experiment in China.

There was no similar indication of significant oral improvement. In this connection the comments of the students on course activities must be taken as relevant.

(b) *Student evaluation*

Two main forms of student evaluations were obtained. At the mid point of the second semester students completed a questionnaire. A summary of responses is included in the Appendix.

A final evaluation session was carried out conversationally by the course co-ordinator with the two teachers not present in the class. The comments were largely in line with the previous written comments. However on this occasion it became clear that there was a reasonably strong impression that while the course had been of great value it had probably been carried out on somewhat too formal a basis. There had not been enough conversational interaction and while the role-playing had been of great value there had been few instances of this. More informal activities together such as cooking, picnics, cinema attendance would have been appreciated and of value.

The immersion approach received guarded approval. Some would have liked more linguistic emphasis though it was recognised that language came through fairly clearly from repetitive interaction, the same expressions being obvious through repeated use from day to day. The expertise of the native language teachers was greatly appreciated.

II.3

DISCUSSION

It is clear that while a good level of success was obtained teachers as well as students were experimenting with (to them) a novel type of course; the whole session was therefore in the nature of a learning experience as regards the approach as well as the content.

It is also fairly clear from the comments that it is not surprising that there was no significant improvement in oral proficiency; there was a general agreement that there could have more, and more informal, oral interaction.

Thus it may be not unreasonable to suggest that the results obtained, encouraging to immersion teaching as they are, could have been stronger if a more thorough-going and interactive approach had been used.

II.3.1 Teachers' comments

This finding was supported by the teachers' comments which emphasised the need for better planning of a more systematic outline and objectives while recognising the essentially exploratory nature of the first course. There was agreement that more oral interaction was required.

However the main difficulty was taken to be the rather too generously open selection of candidates. There was too great a range in the starting (and on-going) abilities of the students. This simply meant that some of the more desirable approaches had to be modified to make allowances for the weaker students, meaning, for example, that somewhat more English was used with these students than would otherwise have been the case to try to help them not to lose touch entirely with their class colleagues. (It is good to be able to record that student relationships which could have been strained by this, in fact, remained good and that the more able students took considerable pride in the fact that the less able had 'stuck it out' to the end.)

It should be made clear that in making this comment there was no suggestion that a full immersion course would not be possible with beginners in the language, but simply arose from the problem of having too wide a range of abilities in the one class. Taking the exploratory nature of the course and methodology as well as the distracting variables mentioned above into account it could be suggested that the significantly better written proficiency results by the immersion course were encouraging. Again the small numbers involved must be mentioned as a reason for extreme caution in interpreting the results.

II.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF IMMERSION LANGUAGE COURSES (STAGE 2) AT EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

BACKGROUND

The receipt of a grant from the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching enabled the stage 1 pilot study to be developed or re-examined in important ways:

- Firstly some attempt could be made to take into account the suggestions and comments made by the student and teachers about the pilot course
- Secondly would the outcomes be confirmed by a more substantial study at a different level of learning-beginners?
- It could be argued that attempting to use immersion with complete beginners presents probably the most difficult challenge to the use of the approach. It

has frequently been argued that while immersion may be applicable to post beginning adult students it cannot be used for true beginners. In other words, should it be possible to show that immersion is successful at this level there could be little doubt about its usefulness at any level

II.5 SELECTION POLICIES

Three groups formed the project:

1. **An immersion non-intensive group** studying for eight hours per week (two nights) for two semesters. Classes were held from 6.00-10.00pm. (11 students completed)
2. **An immersion intensive group** studying for 16 hours per week (four nights) from 6.00-10.00pm for one semester. (10 students completed)
3. **The control group**, being the normal first year university Chinese course studying a skills/language based course for eight hours per week (day and early evening classes) for two semesters. (10 students completed)

No control could be exercised over the internal control group which was simply the normal first year University Chinese (Mandarin) class.

For the two immersion groups, however, after advertising and obtaining applications from about 45 potential students, strenuous attempts were made at preliminary interviews and class discussions to ensure that all students were genuine beginners. Those who claimed to be beginners in Mandarin but with some knowledge of another Chinese dialect were rejected. This policy appears to have been successful with the possible exception of one case.

In view of the funding obtained for the trial courses the students were charged only a very small administration fee. However, from the experience derived from the small scale trial it was decided to require a deposit of \$150 to be returned on completing the course. Students were allowed to choose whether to be in the intensive (one semester) course, or in the normal rate two semester course. The difference between an immersion type course and more normal language courses was explained and indeed emphasised before the commencement of semester.

In the event the students divided very evenly with about 13 or 14 in each of the three groups. The numbers held up very well in each group with completion rates of 10 for the control group, 11 for the intensive immersion group and 10 for the non-intensive immersion.

II.5.1 Planning and Syllabus

The control group followed the normal four unit first year Mandarin degree course. The lecturers taking this course were part of the research planning team though in this case it was deemed wise that they should not have too detailed knowledge of the immersion syllabus so that materials and results could not be intentionally or unintentionally affected. The control group lecturers were fully aware of the approach being attempted in the immersion classes.

In view of the criticism of the stage 1 syllabus it was decided that two lecturers should share the planning and implementation of the immersion classes. Both took an equal part in both the intensive and non-intensive classes. The weeks prior to commencement were used for planning the syllabus, materials and approaches. No textbooks were used by the immersion classes nor was a dictionary recommended to the students though, of course, there was no way of preventing students who so wished from obtaining a dictionary.

As one Chinese lecturer returned to Guangzhou in mid year and was replaced by another visiting Chinese lecturer the students in the immersion classes were actually exposed to three lecturers in their courses. Feedback from the students indicated a favourable response to this variation in lecturing staff.

It was decided to plan the syllabus in the context of a visitor or tourist in China and the most common situations likely to be faced. Topics selected therefore were:

* At the airport/station; Asking for the way; Asking the time; Taking a bus; Talking about the weather; At the hotel; At the post office; Exchanging foreign currency; Making a phone call. Shopping; At a restaurant; Being a guest; Chinese tea; Chinese food; Birthdays; Weddings; At hospital; Travelling and sightseeing.

Within these topics (which were supplied to the students) it was planned for certain functions to be covered but only in a situational way ie. as they arose naturally through the topics and not as any special extensions or practising of the functions. The students were not informed of these functions, which were

* Welcome and greetings; thanks and gratitude; Wishes and congratulations; Apology and regret; Request and advice; Compliment and praise; Approval and agreement; Disapproval and refusal; Seeing off guest and farewell; Invitation and appointment.

II.5.2 Implementation

The following were the major principles applied in the immersion approach:

1. There would be no language work as such in the sense of (eg) grammatical points or structures and their practice. The emphasis would be entirely on the content and situations.
2. English would not be used. There would be a rigorous attempt to immerse in Chinese with explanations if required being given by repetitions, rephrasing, slowing down, gestures and pictures. It would be wrong to claim that no word of English was ever used in either immersion class during the year but every effort was made to hold to this policy.
3. Wherever feasible the situations would be carried out in the form of roleplays and dialogues with students participating in interactions in simple ways from the very beginning of the course. This would progress to activities such as seeing/discussing Chinese films together, having cooking sessions in a student's or teacher's home etc.

While the formation of written characters was never ignored and was present from the very beginning of the course the result of such policies was, of course, that there tended to be an emphasis on oral interaction in the earlier parts of the immersion courses with writing coming to have more emphasis in the later stages when dealing with such matters as invitations to weddings/parties.

The total allocation of hours for each of the immersion classes was precisely the same as for the control group. The intensive immersion class had four four-hour sessions per week (6.00-10.00 pm) for one semester, while the non-intensive group had two 6.00-10.00pm classes per week for two semesters. There was a normal five-week inter-semester break for the non-intensive immersion class as for the control group.

II.6 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

II.6.1 Teacher Evaluation :The Approach

The three teachers were unanimously enthusiastic about the immersion approach adopted while being realistically aware of the problems posed by it. They felt that it gave a realistic setting for learning the language and were all impressed by the enthusiasm and application of the students. The immersion approach appeared to encourage strong motivation. Enjoyment was frequently mentioned by the teachers (and the students).

The immersion approach appeared to encourage a strong community spirit, a point noted in previous trials where difficulties with comprehension and a lack of explanations in English from the teachers appeared to drive the class members into helping each other. A distinct advantage was seen in the approach forcing students to attempt to think in the target language.

In facing realistically the DIFFICULTIES posed by the approach the following points were consistently mentioned by the teachers:

Comprehension posed many problems. This was particularly so in the first two or three weeks of the course when students were immersed in the Chinese language. Gradually order came out of the chaos and none appeared to be over-discouraged. The general meaning of an interaction could usually be grasped but it was a different matter when it came down to word or phrase levels.

Comprehension appeared to be particularly difficult when dealing with **abstract** concepts or in coming to some understanding of **functional** terms (literally 'empty words' in Chinese). **Writing/characters**, of course, presented particular problems with the determination to avoid formal language work, and conversely the emphasis on interactions and dialogues. One of the teachers argued strongly that the learning of characters is quite central to the learning of the Chinese language and noted unfavourably the tendency of quite a number of the students to depend on Pinyin (a Romanised script developed for the Chinese language). The use of **cue cards** was found to be a help with character learning. The teachers unanimously noted their impression that the immersion

students were better in speaking and listening than in reading and writing (though in the event the final proficiency test showed them to be as good in reading as the control group).

It was difficult to avoid entirely the **use of English** though it was kept to an absolute minimum. One teacher ventured an estimate that only rarely would there be as much as a five percent use of English in a session; generally far less, sometimes none at all.

There was general approval of the **content and planning** of the course. The 'daily life' and 'tourism' type topics appeared to suit the approach and meet the needs of the students. It was felt it had been more satisfactory than the trial course's attempt (1993) to have a more academic type content on Chinese history and culture.

II.6.2 **Teacher Evaluation: Class Membership**

The teachers noted very marked differences between the composition of the three groups and considered these differences were bound to affect results.

By far the youngest group in **average age** was the control group, while the intensive immersion had the oldest students. The weakest performances overall came quite clearly from the oldest students though they never gave up trying, were consistently helped by the other members of the class and achieved creditably.

A second significant factor was the **class hours**. While total hours were the same for each class the immersion classes were held from 6.00-10.00pm four (or two) evenings of the week while the control group had day or early evening classes.

Closely related to this was the **employment position**. The control group was composed of full-time students with at the most some part time work. The Chinese classes for them constituted half of their total workload. About half of the intensive immersion class were in full time employment while all but one of the non-intensive immersion students were in full time employment, one of these being a full time student in another institution. Clearly students coming from full time work to four-hour evening classes, particularly for four consecutive nights of the week, had a heavy load and comparatively little time for follow-up study.

While there was no statistical evidence to support it the teacher of the control group was of the opinion that these students constituted one of the ablest first year groups for years. While the effects could not be tabulated the difference in studying for an award and certification from taking classes on a purely voluntary basis was also remarked upon by the teachers.

Summary

Without exception the immersion teachers, when contrasting this approach with their previous experience (and all have had extensive language teaching experience) felt that the approach was enjoyable, effective and should be applied more widely. However there was also general agreement that some modifications would help.

Firstly some grammar/language work should be allowed though only a small percentage of the total. Secondly, the course should be modified to allow for a more natural introduction of a higher proportion of written work. Thirdly a more accurate trial of the effectiveness of the approach would be obtained if important differences in employment situations and times of classes were eliminated.

II.6.3 Student Evaluations

It is almost impossible in a brief summary to do justice to the detail contained in the journals kept by class members; these would be worth a close study and report by themselves. However the general and repeated comments (of course with some clearly stated exceptions) were as follows:

- **Early stages**

The most commonly used word to describe reactions to the first weeks of the course was 'overwhelming'. The experience was new to every class member and, in spite of full descriptions in the preparatory sessions, appeared to catch most by surprise. The impression that this was beyond them was fairly common with a strong temptation to give up right away; indeed of the five or six who did withdraw half did so at this early stage, two immediately after the first session. Gradually as the sessions settled into a recognisable routine they felt they were getting their heads above water, but, for the most part, only just.

- **The immersion approach**

There was a wide range of opinions on this crucial point ranging from those who felt that the approach suited them very well (not surprisingly these tended to be those who turned out to achieve the highest proficiency scores) to one or two who unequivocally stated that they preferred previous experiences with traditional approaches "identifying basic rules of grammar, parts of speech and syntax". Quite a number felt that the strict non-use of English was a hindrance rather than a help. They were admiring of and amused by the teachers' ingenious ploys for trying to clarify meanings or syntax but tended to feel that a few explanatory words in English would have saved much time.

The use of roleplays and other interactions was strongly approved of. Overall there appears to be agreement that immersion in content rather than a language based course was both effective and enjoyable; however there was also common agreement that the approach required some modification and that a minimal amount of grammatical explanation and use of English explanations would have helped rather than hindered.

- **Intensity of instruction**

Both groups found the intensity very stressful, indeed almost too much so. Some in the non-intensive course remarked that they could not imagine how the intensive course students could possibly manage; (the answer was possibly in the fact that a far greater proportion of the intensive course students were not otherwise employed.) The two negative results mentioned were that (particularly towards the end of the courses) the overload became too great - "I was just not keeping up" - and that the learning of the production of characters particularly suffered: there just was not time to master them and quite a number basically settled for Pinyin writing. However, while identifying these problems there was a recognition that the intensity of the course kept the students driving on and achieving more than they had ever thought possible.

- **Content and interest**

Both making the course content-based and the particular content chosen were unanimously approved. The choice was also felt to have been successful in practice as two who visited China in later stages of the course claimed that they were happy to find that they could indeed communicate on the matters covered, at least in oral/aural skills. Presumably closely related to this satisfaction was the interest level which was maintained to the very end, only being threatened by the danger of overload, particularly for two whose business commitments became particularly demanding towards the end of the course.

- **Reading and writing**

There was some division of opinion on the matter of reading and writing Chinese characters. Some felt that this was an important part of learning the language and that not enough time was given to it; they had the impression that it had not in fact been planned in as a major part of the course. Others felt that it was sufficient for their purposes to be able to recognise a good number of characters. All agreed that a great deal of effort was required to be able to write characters and only some with the time to do so felt that they had made much progress in this skill. Certainly the proficiency test results confirmed that the ability to write characters was not a major strength of either of the immersion courses.

- **Team teaching**

There was very high approval for the team approach to teaching, the most common comment being that for people outside a Chinese speaking context it was very helpful to be exposed to three different voices and accents (each of the teachers originating from a different province of the PRC, even though all had been teaching in the Guangzhou Foreign Language University.)

No doubt the most telling comment was the desire expressed by virtually all the students to continue the learning of Chinese, most requesting that it be by the same approach and teachers as those experienced in this course.

II.6.4 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF PROFICIENCY TEST RESULTS

Tests were carried out to examine the significance of differences between each of the three groups (1. Immersion non-intensive; 2. Immersion intensive and 3. Control) on each of the four measures (Speaking, listening, reading, writing plus total scores). These are set out below for each of the skills.

II.6.4.1 Speaking

In the first part of the speaking test candidates were asked to respond in Chinese to two nine questions asked in Chinese. Each question was repeated twice. In the second part the candidates were asked to prepare for five minutes then speak in Chinese for two minutes on one from a choice of four 'everyday' topics.

(a) Immersion non-intensive v. immersion intensive

t-tests for independent samples of GROUP					
Variable		Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
SPEAKING					
Immersion	non- inten	10	14.4500	2.813	.890
Immersion	intensive	11	9.6818	4.986	1.5
Mean Difference = 4.7682					
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F = 4.388 P = .050					
t-test for Equality of Means					
Variiances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	95% CI for Diff
Equal	2.66	19	.015	1.793	(1.015, 8.521)
Unequal	2.73	16.04	.015	1.747	(1.064, 8.472)

(b) Immersion intensive v. control

t-tests for independent samples of GROUP					
Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean	
SPEAKING					
Immersion intensive	11	9.6818	4.986	1.503	
control	10	11.2500	2.300	.727	
Mean Difference = 1.5682					
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F = 7.242 P = .014					
t-test for Equality of Means					
Variiances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	95% CI for Diff
Equal	-.91	19	.375	1.725	(-5.180, 2.044)
Unequal	-.94	14.36	.363	1.670	(-5.151, 2.015)

(c) Immersion non-intensive v. control

t-tests for independent samples of GROUP					
Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean	
SPEAKING					
Immersion non- inten	10	14.4500	2.813	.890	
control	10	11.2500	2.300	.727	
Mean Difference = 3.2000					
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F = .538 P = .473					
t-test for Equality of Means					
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	95% CI for Diff
Equal	2.78	18	.012	1.149	(.785, 5.615)
Unequal	2.78	17.32	.013	1.149	(.775, 5.625)

It will therefore be seen that the non-intensive immersion group performed significantly better than both the intensive immersion and control groups. There is no significant difference between the intensive immersion and control groups. (It is to be noted that there is a wider range of marks in the intensive immersion than in either of the other two groups.)

II.6.4.2 Listening

The candidates listened to twenty short spoken statements, or questions, or dialogues in Chinese, followed by a spoken question about it in English. These were repeated twice. Candidates were asked then to look at the four answers written in English and circle the one that correctly answered the question/statement/dialogue

(a) Immersion non-intensive v. immersion intensive

t-tests for independent samples of GROUP					
Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean	
LISTENING					
Non-intensive	10	24.3000	2.324	.735	
Intensive	11	21.1364	5.172	1.560	
Mean Difference = 3.1636					
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F = 11.360 P = .003					
t-test for Equality of Means					
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	95% CI for Diff
Equal	1.78	19	.092	1.702	(-.568, 6.895)
Unequal	1.84	14.16	.088	1.724	(-.535, 6.862)

(b) Immersion intensive v. control

t-tests for independent samples of GROUP					
Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean	
LISTENING					
Intensive	11	21.1364	5.172	1.560	
Control	10	20.1500	4.679	1.480	
Mean Difference = .9864					
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F = 498 P = .489					
t-test for Equality of Means					
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	95% CI for Diff
Equal	.46	19	.653	2.161	(-3.537, 5.510)
Unequal	.46	19.00	.652	2.150	(-3.514, 5.487)

(c) Immersion non-intensive v. control

t-tests for independent samples of GROUP					
Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean	
LISTENING					
Non-Intensive	10	24.3000	2.324	.735	
Control	10	20.1500	4.679	1.480	
Mean Difference = 4.1500					
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F = 4.726 P = .043					
t-test for Equality of Means					
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	95% CI for Diff
Equal	2.51	18	.022	1.652	(.670, 7.622)
Unequal	2.51	13.19	.026	1.652	(.580, 7.720)

In listening the non-intensive immersion group performed significantly better than the control group. There is no significant difference between the intensive immersion and control groups or between the non-intensive immersion and intensive immersion groups though one notes that there is a trend towards significantly better performance by the non-intensive immersion group. Again the range of marks is highest with the intensive immersion group.

II.6.4.3 Reading

Part 1 consisted of 15 Chinese texts ranging in length from a single sentence to short paragraphs or dialogues. For each text a question in English was shown on the test paper. On the basis of the information provided candidates were required to choose the correct answer from four provided on the paper.

In the second part of the reading test there were twelve sentences written in Chinese characters, each with some missing words indicated by numbered blanks. For each

blank candidates were required to choose one of the four options supplied (also of course in Chinese characters) which completed the missing words of each sentence in the most meaningful and grammatical way.

(a) Non-intensive immersion v intensive immersion

t-tests for independent samples of GROUP					
Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean	
READING					
Non-Intensive	10	28.9600	7.033	2.224	
Intensive	11	25.2727	7.193	2.169	
Mean Difference = 3.6873					
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F = .000 P = .987					
t-test for Equality of Means					
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	95% CI for Diff
Equal	1.19	19	.250	3.110	(-2.823, 10.198)
Unequal	1.19	18.89	.250	3.106	(-2.816, 10.191)

(b) Intensive immersion v. control

t-tests for independent samples of GROUP					
Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean	
READING					
Intensive	11	25.2727	7.193	2.169	
Control	10	29.2700	3.852	1.218	
Mean Difference = 3.9973					
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F = 2.712 P = .116					
t-test for Equality of Means					
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	95% CI for Diff
Equal	-1.56	19	.135	2.557	(-9.351, 1.357)
Unequal	-1.61	15.58	.128	2.487	(-9.272, 1.277)

(c) Non-intensive immersion v. control

t-tests for independent samples of GROUP					
Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean	
READING					
Non-Intensive	10	28.9600	7.033	2.224	
Control	10	29.2700	3.852	1.218	
Mean Difference = .3100					
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F = 2.813 P = .111					
t-test for Equality of Means					
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	95% CI for Diff
Equal	-.12	18	.904	2.536	(-5.639, 5.019)
Unequal	-.12	13.95	.904	2.536	(-5.750, 5.130)

It is immediately evident that there are no significant differences in performance in reading between the three groups. Both of the immersion groups have a greater range of marks than the control group.

II.6.4.4 Writing

In the writing section of the test candidates were required to write about fifty words in Chinese on a specified 'everyday' topic with which it was felt they would be familiar. They were asked to write in Chinese characters. Where they could not do so they were permitted to write in Pinyin but were told that more credit would be given for Chinese characters.

(a) Non-intensive immersion v. intensive immersion

t-tests for independent samples of GROUP					
Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean	
WRITING					
Non-Intensive	10	3.4200	1.931	.611	
Intensive	11	4.4091	2.386	.719	
Mean Difference = .9891					
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F = .622 P = .440					
t-test for Equality of Means					
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	95% CI for Diff
Equal	-1.04	19	.313	.954	(-2.985, 1.007)
Unequal	-1.05	18.77	.308	.944	(-2.965, .986)

(b) Intensive immersion v. control

t-tests for independent samples of GROUP					
Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean	
WRITING					
Intensive	11	4.4091	2.386	.719	
Control	10	6.0500	1.978	.626	
Mean Difference = 1.6409					
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F = 383 P = .543					
t-test for Equality of Means					
Variations	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	95% CI for Diff
Equal	-1.71	19	.104	.962	(-3.655, .373)
Unequal	-1.72	18.86	.102	.953	(-3.637, .355)

(c) Non-intensive immersion v. control

t-tests for independent samples of GROUP					
Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean	
WRITING					
Non-Intensive	10	3.4200	1.931	.611	
Control	10	6.0500	1.978	.626	
Mean Difference = 2.6300					
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F = .039 P = .045					
t-test for Equality of Means					
Variations	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	95% CI for Diff
Equal	-3.01	18	.008	.874	(-4.467, -.793)
Unequal	-3.01	17.99	.008	.874	(-4.467, -.793)

In the writing test the control group performed significantly better than the non-intensive immersion group and quite a bit better than the intensive immersion though not significantly so statistically.

II.6.4.5 Total marks

The total marks were the sums of each of the sections for each group. It is probably sufficient to say that there were no significant differences in totals between any of the groups, the order of performance of the groups being non-intensive immersion (mean = 71.0), then control (mean = 66.6) then intensive immersion (mean = 60.4) The range of scores for the non-intensive group and the control group was almost identical, but was much higher for the intensive immersion.

II.6.5 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

II.6.5.1 Comments by Staff and Students

1. Comments from both the teaching and learning sides on the immersion approach are generally very favourable.
2. The creation and maintenance of high levels of interest appears to have been a major factor in these favourable evaluations.
3. A team teaching approach for language learning/teaching was strongly supported.
4. In spite of the over-all favourable evaluation some doubts were expressed about a 'total' immersion approach as implemented in this project. There was a fair measure of agreement that
 - (a) it was unnecessary to avoid completely the use of English in such matters as vocabulary items which could not be readily demonstrated in other ways.
 - (b) it was probably counterproductive in working with adult learners not to make some use of their knowledge of and interest in language construction in such matters as grammatical or structural problems.

In both cases, however, these modifications should be minimal; the overall immersion principle should not be abandoned.

These comments are more or less in line with those made by Dr. Zhu Yongmin who conducted the Chinese strand of the University of Utah immersion programme and in a letter concluded (after discussing many advantages and promising aspects):

"We really should take advantage of the adult learner's analytical and comparative ability in language learning/acquisition to minimise their first language interference, or at least change this distracting feature to a constructive one."

5. At least one of the teachers felt strongly that programme planning should give even more emphasis to the writing of Chinese characters which he saw as central to the process of learning Mandarin.
6. The immersion approach has been consistently reported as engendering a strong community spirit in the classes exposed to it. The present project strongly confirms this finding.
7. The main 'danger' period in immersion courses is in the first two or three weeks when students feel overwhelmed by the experience and are strongly tempted to abandon the effort. Special strategies need to be employed to see students through this period.

8. As far as this project is concerned, high intensity of instruction appears to militate against student ability to enjoy and benefit from the immersion approach. This student impression must however, be balanced against the level of other commitments (eg. full time employment) undertaken by the students.

II.6.5.2 Statistical Results

In spite of the reservations expressed by both students and teachers regarding the 'total' immersion approach their general enthusiasm for immersion as experienced in this project is reflected by the results of the proficiency tests.

The immersion group working at the same level of intensity as the control group was

- significantly better in speaking
- significantly better in listening
- equal in reading
- significantly poorer in writing (though the intensive immersion course was not)
- better, though not significantly so in overall scores

These results would appear to give a good measure of support for the use of the immersion approach in higher education. This is all the more so in view of the following factors which might have been expected to have a negative effect upon them:

- The choice of Chinese (Mandarin) as the language to be learned might well be considered a sterner test than that which would be posed by many other languages.
- The use of the immersion approach with complete beginners is probably the most severe demand that could be placed upon it as far as levels of language learning are concerned.
- The average age for the immersion group was much higher than for the control group.
- To gain entrance to the control group normal university entrance standards had to be met. This was not so with the immersion group; while some would undoubtedly have met such requirements (one was a university lecturer, one a student in another university, several were graduates) there were others who certainly would not have met such requirements
- Perhaps most significantly more than 50% of the immersion group were in full time employment, often with heavy responsibilities, whereas for the control group these language studies formed half of their total working (ie. academic) commitment. It would seem clearly established that where there are these levels of employment while taking an immersion course high levels of intensity affect results negatively.

The team teaching approach could have been a factor in the immersion class's superiority in oral/aural skills. The voices heard and responded to in the tests were voices they had not heard before. Exposure to a greater number of voices in class could have assisted with this.

Probably the major factor affecting the weaker performance in writing by the immersion groups is the intensity of instruction/level of employment interplay. It would generally be acknowledged that considerable 'practice' time is required for developing skills in character

writing and this time may simply not have been available to the immersion groups. This interpretation is supported by the poorer performance by the non-intensive immersion with their almost 100% full-time employment rate. Less instruction, or at least less formal instruction, on the writing of characters with the immersion groups may also have been a factor.

II.6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS AFFECTING EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

1. That ECU and other university language departments continue to trial the immersion approach in view of these promising results.
2. That the next stages of the trial should incorporate the following modifications to the approach used in the present project:
 - (a) The syllabus should be slightly adjusted towards a somewhat greater emphasis on writing.
 - (b) In line with the students' and teachers' recommendations a minimal use of English should be permitted to avoid time-consuming and less effective approaches to eg. arriving at the meaning of a word or phrase.
 - (c) In line with the students' and teachers' recommendations some structural or grammatical explanations could be included without abandoning the essential content base of the course.
3. The trials should now be broadened to other languages. It seems reasonable to suppose that, promising as these outcomes appear to be, results might be even stronger with languages less distant from English than Mandarin Chinese.
4. Ideally the next trials should be structured by a random distribution into two groups of a single population of students eg. the internal first year students of Chinese. This would avoid variables such as employment or academic entry levels affecting, or possibly affecting, results.
5. Wherever possible a team teaching approach should be considered for the teaching of languages in higher education.

III IMPLEMENTATION OF AN IMMERSION LANGUAGE COURSE AT GUANGZHOU FOREIGN LANGUAGE UNIVERSITY

III.1 STUDENT SELECTION

Considerable administrative difficulty was experienced in setting up this immersion trial as implementation depended on the cooperation of departments other than the English department to achieve comparability of groups. These difficulties in fact delayed the experiment for a complete calendar year meaning that an extension of the project completion date had to be sought.

Through the cooperation of the Japanese language section of the Department of Eastern Languages the project was able to proceed in the first semester (September - December) of 1994.

The course structure of that department requires students to take English as a second foreign language from the first semester of the second year. By selecting first and second year students for the trial there could be some assurance of comparability since levels for university entrance would be similar and neither group would yet have studied English at university level.

For the immersion group all members of the group were first year undergraduates from the Department of Eastern Languages, majoring in Japanese.

For the control group all were second year undergraduates from the same department also majoring in Japanese.

III.2 IMPLEMENTATION

III.2.1 DURATION OF COURSES

Immersion Group	12 September to 31 December 1994 16 teaching weeks plus one examination week.
Non-immersion Group	1 September to 31 December 1994 17 teaching weeks plus one examination week.

Each group had four hours of English per week.

III.2.2 COURSE CONTENT

Immersion Group: A social-cultural introductory course covering such topics as geography, history, government system, economy, media, festivals, religion, people's lifestyles and so on, of British and American society. The materials were selected from different resource books on British or American culture.

Non-immersion group: This was a normal part of the university programme. The textbook was a fairly typical Chinese style reader: "College English: Intensive Reading" by Zhai Xiangju, Chinese Foreign Language Education Press (1979), containing short extracts from articles followed by vocabulary, pattern drilling, blank filling and translation exercises.

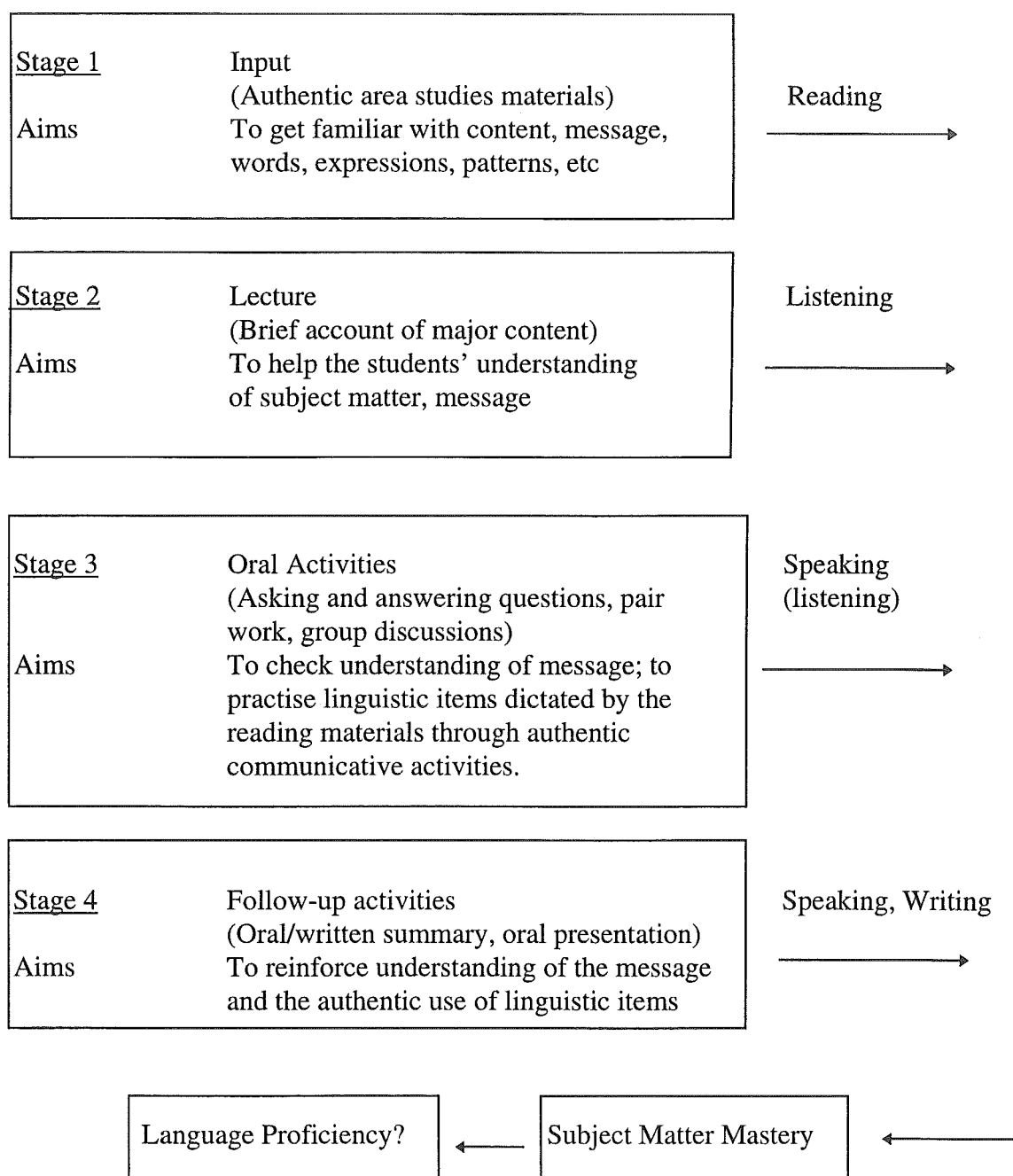
In addition, due to a requirement to show test evidence of ability to listen with understanding, non-immersion students received one hour per fortnight (an eighth of the course) being coached and instructed on listening skills in the form of deliberate practice of the types of listening questions contained in the test.

This practice in listening test items proved to have an interesting effect on the outcomes of the post test. (see III.3 Discussion of Analyses below).

III.2.3 TEACHING APPROACHES

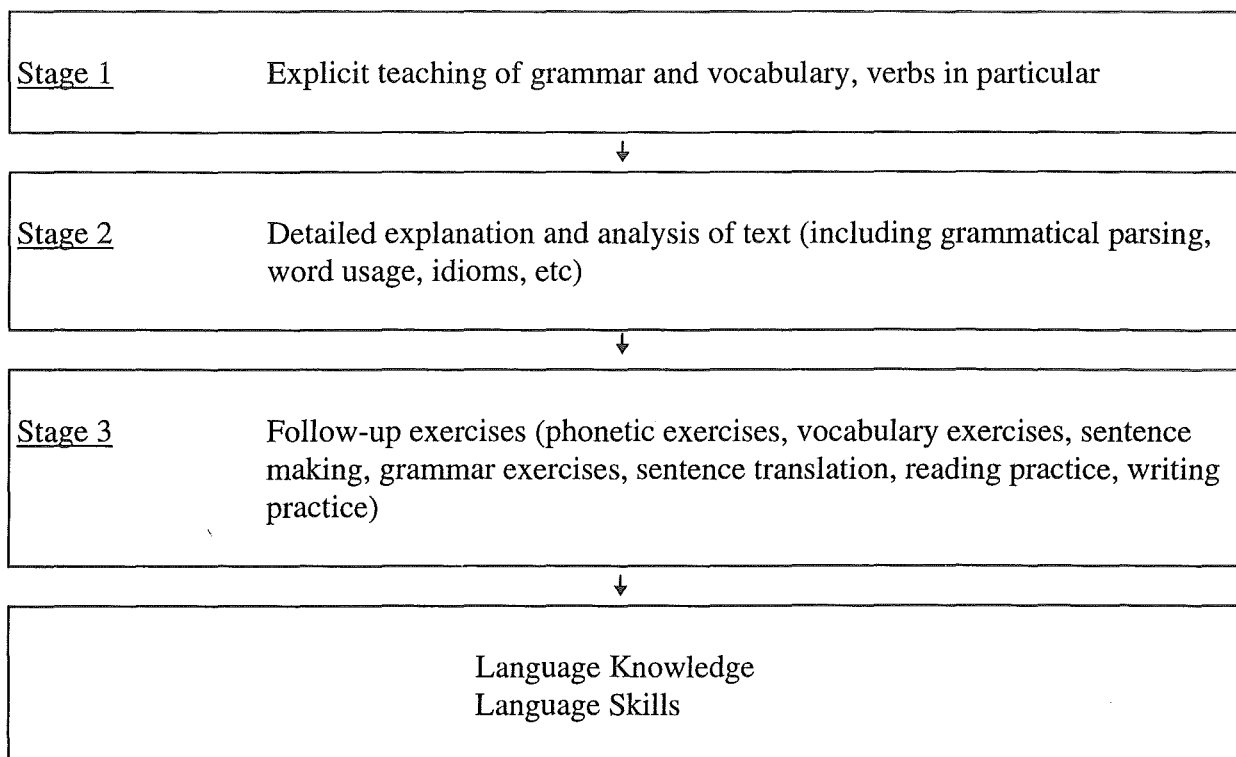
For the immersion group all the language skills, listening, speaking, reading and simple writing were involved, and activities ranged from listening to the teacher's material, asking and answering questions, pair work, group discussion, oral presentations, to reading assignments after class. The instruction was designed in light of the late immersion models in Canada and America, ie, all activities were conducted principally in English. Minimum Chinese was allowed for explanation of some abstract concepts. There was no explicit teaching of grammar or sentence patterns, nor were there any vocabulary or pronunciation exercises. The students were encouraged to use as much English as possible in class in all activities and were allowed to respond in Chinese when they really could not express themselves in the target language. The teachers, who always responded in English, were from the English Department, GFLU.

The general procedures of classroom activities (by no means rigidly adhered to) can be summarised as follows:



The ultimate goal of the classroom instruction and activities was to provide the students with conditions and opportunities to use and acquire language skills unconsciously through natural, authentic and meaningful activities. As they tried to understand the subject matter it was hoped that at the same time they would learn the linguistic items required by the subject matter materials.

The non-immersion (control) group followed an Intensive Reading course, a typical course of English at Chinese universities. The teachers employed a traditional grammar-translation method integrated with some 'audio lingual' techniques such as pattern practice or drilled dialogues. This group therefore followed a skills-based instruction model which still dominates foreign language teaching in most parts of China. The teacher was from the teaching group which was responsible for all ESFL courses at GFLU. The procedures for classroom activities were generally as follows:



III.2.4 EVALUATION

Three approaches were used in evaluating this aspect of the project:

III.2.4.1 Pre and Post Proficiency Tests

Listening Comprehension

Subjects were required to listen to ten sentences or dialogues then answer two or three written multiple choice questions on each statement/dialogue:

eg:

1. Michael Turner used to ;
 - a) study in the same university with the man
 - b) study in the same class with the woman
 - c) be a classmate of the woman's husband.
 - d) be a classmate of the woman's brother

2. Who were the two speakers?
 - a) students in a school
 - b) teachers in a school
 - c) classmates in a university
 - d) colleagues in a university

Structure and Grammar

This test consisted of thirty written sentences or dialogues with blanks to be filled in by the students by choosing from four options:

eg:

1. Is the manager here?

No, he has left _____ Beijing _____ business.

- a) to, for
- b) for, for
- c) for, on
- d) to, on

OR

2. It seemed there was something wrong with John. I thought he wasn't acting like _____

- a) him
- b) himself
- c) he does
- d) he would

Cloze

The cloze test consisted of a passage on travel to and from China in early days of contact with the outside world.

Candidates were requested to fill 25 blanks, in each case a choice of four possible words being supplied. The blanks were not structural but semantic in nature.

Reading

This test consisted of four passages on fairly typical socio-cultural themes (eg on the first American lady doctor, or on climactic factors and their effects)

The candidates were required to answer five multiple choice answers on each passage; the questions related to meanings and implications.

Writing

The writing test was perhaps the least structured of any of the tests and consisted of being required to write a 100 - 200 word letter according to the instructions given eg You have an

English friend who wishes to come to China to learn Chinese. He wonders if he should come to Beijing or Guangzhou. Write and give him your advice on the advantages and disadvantages of each place.

Oral

The subject is invited to play the part of a Chinese student studying in England. He has a Japanese friend also studying in England who wishes the subject to find out for him about the possibility of obtaining a job to help support himself while in England.

Examiner A plays the part of a clerk at the Job Centre. The subject has a list of five topics to which he wants answers but must construct and ask the questions then hear and make notes on the answers given to be able to tell his Japanese friend.

Examiner B plays the part of the Japanese friend who hears the subject's answers to the information he wants and adds four additional questions.

The working scheme gives credit for correct content of the questions asked and information given by the subject and additionally takes into account grammatical construction, appropriate intonation and pronunciation and global impression (eg greetings, pardon me, please repeat that etc)

In all six tests the structure for pre and post tests was exactly the same but the content of the post test was somewhat more difficult than the pre-test.

All tests were double marked (including an independent marker) and conducted by the two lecturers who were involved in the teaching of both the immersion and control classes. There was a fairly high drop-out rate in each class with the immersion class dropping from 22 to 13 students and the control group from 26 to 13 (though in the latter case the drop-outs were for the second proficiency test rather than from the course since taking the test was seen as an 'extra' and voluntary).

III.2.4.2 Student evaluation was obtained by discussion with the teachers and student comments including a 'morning tea' discussion with both groups together at the end of the courses at which experiences were compared and contrasted

III.2.4.3 Teacher evaluation was obtained by discussions between the teachers sharing the course and by written comments.

III.3 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

III.3.1 Pre-test Summary

A preliminary summary of the pre-test results gathering all the written/reading and oral/aural sections together shows that the experiment and contrast groups were indeed very similar in scores:

Results of the pre-tests

TESTS	WRITTEN		ORAL	
Groups	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd
E.G. (n=32)	65.75	7.739	21.07	3.491
C.G. (n=23)	66.21	8.399	19.92	3.872

III.3.2 Post-test Analysis

Univariate F tests were carried out for each variable on post-tests using pre-tests as the independent variable, giving the following results:

Effect..Group

Multivariate Tests of Significance (S=1, M=2, N=51/2)

Test Name	Value	Exact F	Hypoth.DF	Error DF	Sif of DF
Pillais	.48605	2.04903	6.00	13.00	.131
Hottelings	.94571	2.04903	6.00	13.00	.131
Wilks	.51395	2.04903	6.00	13.00	.131
Roys	.48605				

Effect..Group

Univariate F-tests with (1,18) D.F.

Variable	Hypoth.SS	Error.SS	Hypoth.M.S	Error.MS	F	Sif of F
Postcloz	.25169	129.93259	.25169	7.21848	.03487	.854
Postlist	13.22878	295.35302	13.22878	16.40850	.80621	.381
Postoral	64.56100	204.80192	64.56100	11.37788	5.67425	.028
Postread	.94867	62.50045	.94867	3.47225	.27321	.608
Poststr	24.29956	272.04120	24.29956	15.11340	1.60782	.221
Postwrit	12.85967	101.64016	12.85967	5.64668	2.27739	.149

Adjusted and Estimated Means

Variable..Postcloz

Cell	Obs.Mean	Adj.Mean	Est.Mean	Raw. Resid	Std. Resid
Immersion	19.462	19.608	19.462	.000	.000
Control	20.000	19.584	20.000	.000	.000

Adjusted and Estimated Means
Variable..Postlist

Cell	Obs.Mean	Adj.Mean	Est.Mean	Raw. Resid	Std. Resid
Immersion	19.846	19.569	19.846	.000	.000
Control	21.007	21.354	21.077	.000	.000

Adjusted and Estimated Means
Variable..Postoral

Cell	Obs.Mean	Adj.Mean	Est.Mean	Raw. Resid	Std. Resid
Immersion	22.231	22.106	22.231	.000	.000
Control	18.038	18.163	18.038	.000	.000

Adjusted and Estimated Means
Variable..Postread

Cell	Obs.Mean	Adj.Mean	Est.Mean	Raw. Resid	Std. Resid
Immersion	16.154	16.085	16.154	.000	.000
Control	15.538	15.607	15.538	.000	.000

Adjusted and Estimated Means
Variable..Poststr

Cell	Obs.Mean	Adj.Mean	Est.Mean	Raw. Resid	Std. Resid
Immersion	19.692	20.094	19.692	.000	.000
Control	18.077	17.675	18.077	.000	.000

Adjusted and Estimated Means
Variable..Postwrit

Cell	Obs.Mean	Adj.Mean	Est.Mean	Raw. Resid	Std. Resid
Immersion	14.346	14.265	14.346	.000	.000
Control	12.423	12.505	12.423	.000	.000

Analysis of Variance

Combined Adjusted Means for Group
Variable..Postcloz

Group		
Immersion	UNGWT.	19.60765
Control	UNGWT	19.85388

Combined Adjusted Means for Group
Variable..Postlist

Group		
Immersion	UNGWT.	19.56898
Control	UNGWT	21.35410

Combined Adjusted Means for Group
Variable..Postoral

Group		
Immersion	UNGWT.	22.10641
Control	UNGWT	18.16282

Combined Adjusted Means for Group
Variable..Postread

Group		
Immersion	UNGWT.	16.08517
Control	UNGWT	15.60713

Combined Adjusted Means for Group
Variable..Poststr

Group		
Immersion	UNGWT.	20.09431
Control	UNGWT	17.67492

Combined Adjusted Means for Group
Variable..Postwrit

Group		
Immersion	UNGWT.	14.26464
Control	UNGWT	12.50460

Analysis at GFLU

It is interesting to note that the researchers at GFLU, working on the reasonable assumption that sample sizes might not justify more powerful analysis decided to use U- values, a non-parametric test, to establish the significance of differences in the post-tests. They first of all showed that the U-values for the Pre-test section in no case reached critical u-values and judged that the two groups could therefore be considered as being very similar in proficiency:

Means of Pre-test Items

ITEMS	WRITTEN						ORAL
Groups	L	G	C	R	W	T	
E.G.(13)	14.76	20.85	18.92	27.85	9.34	70.27	21.07
C.G.(13)	14.08	18.46	19.31	28.92	8.23	67.92	19.92

Notes: E.G. = experiment group
 C.G. = control group
 L = listening comprehension
 G = grammar and structure
 C = cloze
 R = reading comprehension
 W = writing
 T = total (percentage)

*U-values of Pre-test items

TEST ITEMS		U-VALUES
Written test	Total	75.5
	Listening	54.5
	Grammar	54.0
	Cloze	74.5
	Reading	69.0
	Writing	57.0
Oral test		60.5
Ne = 13 Nc = 13	p = 0.05 critical U-values = 45	

Notes: *: in the operation, only the lower U-values are listed in the table
 Ne = number of students in the experiment
 Nc = number of students of the control group

Repeating the same procedures with the different sections of the post-tests the following results were established:

Means of Post-test Items

ITEMS	WRITTEN						ORAL
Groups	L	G	C	R	W	T	
E.G.(13)	19.85	18.92	19.46	16.15	14.27	71.54	22.23
C.G.	20.50	18.29	20.00	15.43	12.19	68.46	17.64

Notes: E.G. = experiment group
 C.G. = control group
 L = listening comprehension
 G = grammar and structure
 C = cloze
 R = reading comprehension
 W = writing
 T = total (percentage)

*U-values of Post-test Items

TEST ITEMS		U-VALUES
Written test	Total	71.5
	Listening	79.0
	Grammar	90.5
	Cloze	90.5
	Reading	70.0
	Writing	46.5*
Oral test		42.0*
Ne = 13 Nc = 14	p = 0.05 critical U-values = 50	

Notes: *: in the operation, only the lower U-values are listed in the table
 Ne = number of students in the experiment
 Nc = number of students of the control group

III.3.3 DISCUSSION OF ANALYSES

It is probably true to say that the univariate Homogeneity of Variance Tests carried out justify the use of the more powerful analysis of covariance procedures used.

Two results stand out

- a) Both procedures show that in each case the immersion group were significantly better in their oral proficiency. This, of course, is in line with the findings of the Chinese course analysis at Edith Cowan University
- b) Secondly, the next closest to significance, and, using the U-values test, actually significant difference was in writing. This of course is in strong contrast to the Edith Cowan University Chinese course results for beginning students, but is in line with the results for third year, more advanced students, which is exactly what the GFLU students were, all having had considerable experience of English in middle school.

None of the structural or grammatical tests show significant differences, a matter of some importance when the language based content of the control group is considered.

One contrast in results, however, at least on the surface, is surprising and requires comment. It might appear puzzling that the immersion group could be clearly superior in oral results yet not at all superior in listening.

Closer examination, however, reveals a very straight-forward explanation of the apparent contradiction:

If a single purpose/objective is to be stated, this purpose for the control group was to pass the Band Four examination, a TOEFL type test, to pass this test at the required level being a national requirement for graduation. This course therefore taught grammar, vocabulary and

pronunciation explicitly as the major tasks. What is more, in order to help the students to pass this Band Four examination, there was a listening component (one hour every two weeks) which was tuned finely to the format of the Band Four examination. (See examples in section III.2.4.1 Listening Comprehension) This could explain why this group did as well as they did in the post listening test. Since, however, students of this group did not have as much opportunity to use English for communication in the classroom, they did not show equal ability in the communicative type of tests (the post writing and oral tests, see section III.2.4.1), as the immersion group.

III.4 STUDENT EVALUATION

Most students said they experienced problems and difficulties in following the immersion course. They found it hard to follow the teachers as “the teachers always speak English and English was not taught like this in middle school”. Those who dropped out from the immersion group indicated that they would not learn much as the teachers “do not teach vocabulary, grammar or patterns”, (though the teachers kept encouraging them and explaining to them what immersion really meant). This is considered to be the major reason for the student drop-out rate.

On the other hand, of those who remained in the course and completed the final tests almost all said that they had never thought they could improve so much, particularly in listening and speaking, and they would like to take the course for one more semester.

The non-immersion students actually did not drop out for their course, but just did not come to do the final proficiency tests. As they were all volunteers, it was really hard to control them. Another possible reason was that the test fell in examination weeks. They had another 5 or 6 examinations to take that week.

III.5 TEACHER COMMENT ON STUDENT REACTIONS

It was noted that in the first weeks of the immersion course most students expressed frustration and difficulty in following the course, which is what had been expected. They said that the course was not the kind of English course they had expected, as it did not ‘teach grammar, usage, phrases and verb patterns’. Although the teachers repeatedly explained to them the basic principles of the immersion approach, it was found to be extremely difficult to change the attachment they had for the traditional grammar translation method which they had got used to in middle school. It is believed this was the major reason why nine of the students dropped out from the course. Those who remained in the course, however, invariably expressed their strong desire to take the same type of immersion course for another semester. Most of them said that they had not expected to progress so much in listening, reading and speaking (interestingly, they did not mention writing). From the talks held with them during and after the course, it was noted that most of them had developed a stronger interest in English language learning and the cultures of the English-speaking countries. Through the course the students acquired basic background information useful for the understanding of the social and cultural life of these countries and became more aware of current issues. They developed a positive attitude meaning that they no longer see English learning as a boring rote-learning of grammatical rules, word usage and sentence patterns, but a rather interesting process of inter-cultural appreciation and understanding. They will surely benefit from this positive attitude they have developed in their further English study. By contrast, most of the

control group students said English was just an obligatory course for them and did not feel any improvement in their English after the semester's study. The general impression was that this group had a rather negative attitude toward their progress in English and the program they were involved in.

Apart from these positive findings the teachers also noticed that, although the immersion students were quite fluent in expressing their ideas in speaking and writing, there were quite a number of grammatical defects in their 'interlanguage'. Some of the errors could be considered reasonably serious. This might indicate that language accuracy with the immersion students is a problem.

III.6 TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS ON POSSIBLE EXTENSIONS OF THE GFLU IMMERSION EXPERIMENT

The GFLU project team recommends that, in view of the promising results and relatively small numbers involved in the first trials the immersion experiment be extended keeping the following points in mind:

1. It was the opinion of the teachers that the immersion course was probably not intensive enough (four hours a week). Many negotiations had to be undertaken with the relevant departments, but these hours were the best that could be achieved. A few teachers from the English department expressed their interest in the immersion approach but not many comments were forthcoming from them.
2. The use of volunteers was not on the whole a help to the trials and should if possible be avoided.
3. If possible larger scale trials should be conducted.
4. In China the use of zero beginners continues to be undesirable particularly in view of the requirements of the national syllabus.
5. The experiment should be conducted over a longer period; the teachers believe that the trends in favour of immersion would have developed significantly over a lengthier trial.
6. A higher level of financial and staffing support from the relevant authorities is desirable.
7. Thorough preparation of the teachers involved is desirable to have a clear concept of immersion methodology and to develop good techniques for responding quickly and appropriately to student needs.

III.7 RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE FUTURE USE OF IMMERSION APPROACHES AT GFLU

On the basis of the encouraging results in communicative proficiency arising from the immersion trial, yet keeping in mind the Chinese reluctance to abandon established approaches, the following Communicative-Immersion model for English teaching is proposed, having two parts:

III.7.1 THE CORE COURSE

GFLU should continue to use the core course books of Communicative English for Chinese Learners, but improvements should be made through the following modifications:

- cancel those activities which take a lot of classroom time but do not have much communicative significance;
- update the materials in the textbooks with newer or better examples if possible;
- add some more subject area content in the form of listening or reading comprehension
- and most importantly, see to it that the teachers organise classroom activities communicatively (it is regrettable that some teachers are not teaching CECL communicatively, though it is supposed to be a communicative course!).

III.7.2 AN IMMERSION-TYPE COURSE IN SUBJECT AREA STUDIES

In all English departments at Chinese universities, it has long been taken for granted that 'basic language courses' (like CECL) should cover the whole of the first two academic years, while 'academic courses' can only come to the curriculum in the last two years when the students are proficient enough to take these courses. On the basis of the results of this experiment it is suggested that students will learn better and gain more if offered some cultural introductory courses in the earlier years of their language development i.e. in first and second years of university. It is to be noted that such students even at first year level are not beginners in English as they have had several years of the language in middle school. The Canadian late immersion programs and the IM/ML program at the University of Utah have all proved that such a course can be effective in enhancing the language development of second/foreign language students.

It is suggested that such an immersion-type course could run parallel to the core communicative course. It should discuss in greater depth such topics as history, customs, people's lives, geography, political and governmental systems, media, medicine, festivals, sports, arts, economy, literature, and even basic science. The order of occurrence of these topics should be in line with that of the core communicative course, and the materials should be adapted to suit the level of the students' language development. Instructions should be mainly in the medium of English and would involve all the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Classroom activities can include asking and answering questions, group discussions, oral presentations, writing summaries, and home reading.

Materials should be simplified from available sources like encyclopaedias, books of knowledge and facts, almanacs, English language newspapers and magazines and even television programmes. Audio or video resources should also be used if available. These sources are generally not hard to obtain in the present information age.

One important goal of this immersion-type course would therefore be to supplement (not replace) the core course in which the content materials on the relevant topics are usually very general and not adequate in quantity. Another purpose of such a course is to give students an earlier opportunity to experience the benefits of 'natural' language learning and, to a further extent, activate their interest in the target language (and perhaps in language learning at the same time). As these area topics are relevant to what they often hear or read about either in

their mother tongue or in English, they might have a sense of achievement and success when they are really using the target language in the discussion of such topics. It is hoped that this will prove to be beneficial for their future development in the language and in their academic advance in general. Works in the core course will of course keep students focussed on correctness as well as fluency.

IV DISCUSSION

The ULTRA Project has been implemented with two major concerns: the first of these has been to investigate effective approaches to language teaching and learning at university level; the second has been the equally important question of whether approaches that have proved effective in one setting, language or level are equally effective with different settings, languages and levels. Particularly significant here, therefore, has been the international cooperation which has characterised this project involving, as it has, two very different languages and cultures.

IV.1 APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Underlying virtually all discussions on approaches to language teaching and learning has been the distinction between acquisition and learning. Krashen characterised acquisition as a subconscious process which results in knowledge of a language while learning is a conscious process resulting in knowledge about a language. While the outcomes of these two processes as described by Krashen have been challenged, particularly in the long term sense, the basic distinction between acquisition and learning has gained wide acceptance.

This in turn has led to discussions of the input which language learners receive. At one extreme is the acquisition by a child of his/her native language where for a long time there is no conscious learning or teaching. The child is simply immersed in the language, though this must be modified by saying that the exposure is usually within settings that are meaningful to the child and the language may to some degree be modified by the adults with whom he/she has most contact. Perhaps an even more extreme example is when a foreign language learner is simply immersed in the foreign language situation and left to sink or swim.

In contrast to this, much foreign language teaching seems to concentrate on getting students consciously to learn items of language, often in isolation, ie, this is a conscious concentration on elements of the language, probably across all the skills. This, at least until recently, has certainly characterised approaches to language teaching in China. If we take input to be the language which students hear or read, a distinction is made between 'roughly tuned' input and 'finely tuned' input. The former input is based on the acceptance of the fact that the input should not simply be any or all of the language being learned but that, in a way somewhat analogous to the degree of modification for a child native language learning, the input should contain language already known by the students as well as language that is new to them ie, to use Krashen's now famous term, it should at least for the most part, be 'comprehensible input', ie at a level higher than the individuals are capable of using but at a level they are capable of understanding.

In contrast to this, finely tuned input is what is provided for conscious learning and should presumably be at a level chosen to be precisely the level of the language learners.

The ULTRA project has employed each of these types of input. With the intensive stage of the experiment the input was a mixture of roughly and finely tuned language, both acquisition and learning being aimed at. However, within the immersion stage of this project the input was virtually entirely 'roughly tuned' with a deliberate avoidance of elements that could have led to conscious language learning.

A second major and most relevant question which arises in discussing approaches is not so much the type of input but the notion of the tasks undertaken by the learners. Tasks there must be for all learners but the choice here is between tasks based on learning grammatical points, structures or functions which can result in de-contextualised practice and tasks that as Allwright (1977) argued:

“are directed exclusively at involving learners with solving communication problems in the target language... then language learning will take care of itself.”

Using this approach the tasks will involve the students in communication activities in a meaningful situation. Allwright himself attempted this successfully with intermediate level language learners at the University of Essex where foreign students about to take postgraduate courses were given activities which forced them to use English (eg. finding out the library system, interviewing professors) rather than being helped with grammar etc. (The teachers did not even correct errors).

In a well known large scale project in Bangalore, Southern India, N.S. Prabhu (1987) and his colleagues implemented what they called a ‘procedural’ (rather than a language-based) syllabus where the students had to perform tasks such as finding the way on maps, interpreting timetables etc. Two points to note about that project are that pre-tasks were performed involving such matters as checking vocabulary, and that the class numbers participating were large (generally between forty five and sixty). In view of this latter factor the favourable results are particularly significant.

Clearly the immersion aspect of the ULTRA project falls squarely within this latter tradition with the students undertaking no specific language work (perhaps the learning of some Chinese characters could be taken as an exception to this though again these were for communicative purposes such as reading a sign). Instead, meaningful communicative tasks such as introducing themselves, finding out about families, asking for directions, issuing invitations etc were undertaken.

While therefore the general background to the ULTRA project places it within aspects of approaches to language learning and teaching that have been the subject of much discussion, experimentation and research within recent years the more distinctive features of this project are:

1. The level at which this experiment was carried out ie. with university level language work.
2. The ‘purity’ of the approach in the immersion aspect of the project ie. the complete absence of any language work or of the use of English (in Australia) or Chinese(in China)
3. The experimentation with the approaches at different levels of language learning, and particularly the use of immersion with adult beginners.
4. The parallel strands in Australia and China with particular interest in the reaction of Chinese students to a radically different approach.

IV.2 FINDINGS

IV.2.1 Intensiveness of Courses

While the effects of the intensiveness of courses must be looked on as the less important aspect of the project, certain observations should be made:

- With the conditions (content, teaching approaches) being identical the general trend is clearly in favour of the intensive instruction. In Australia this reached significant levels in the written examination and in total marks while in China the difference in favour of intensiveness was significant in terms of the overall achievement scores. In no case were the results significantly in favour of the control group.
- This favourable trend is unaffected by the degree of intensiveness. Neither of the experimental groups could be taken as highly intensive while the Guangzhou intensive group was only working at the same level of intensity as the ECU non-intensive group.
- The favourable trend is also unaffected by the language level of the study being undertaken, being as evident with more advanced students as beginners in the language.
- The favourable trend is also unaffected by the language if we may judge from the two languages being employed in the project. It may be therefore that these findings can be generalised though these findings should be checked with a wider range of languages.
- While if the ECU results alone were taken into account the effects of motivation (since the students of the experimental group were all volunteers) might be taken to have a significant effect, this cannot be said of the Guangzhou group since both were undertaking compulsory courses. It could, in any case, be argued that at ECU the control group students were also volunteers since all had opted voluntarily for Chinese studies.

There are however two results and observations that suggest a need for further investigation:

- Firstly, some students appear to be unsuited for intensive work. They were, practically from the commencement of studies, unhappy and fell further and further behind their class peers. For their own sakes as well as the sake of the other students it might be wise to have allowed them to opt out of intensive approaches. This might also suggest that it would be unfair for courses to be confined exclusively to intensive work as some students who might otherwise succeed may be lost to the learning of the language.
- Secondly, there is some doubt as to whether intensiveness allows for the same level of development of oral proficiency; it may be that there is simply insufficient time for the development of oral proficiency but it is difficult to see why that should be more so with oral than with written work, though it is possible that oral interaction can be seen as confined (in this case) to the classroom whereas reading and writing can continue at home.
- The effect of the degree of motivation, however, cannot be entirely discounted. At ECU the intensive group had opted to attend this course and

had made a contribution financially. (Yet so, in a sense had the control group) In China clearly the control group would like to have been trying the intensive approach and indicated this plainly in discussion with the teachers.

IV.2.1 Immersion Approaches

In the more significant aspect of the research the use of immersion approaches to language teaching and learning in university was investigated with different levels of learners, different languages, different educational and cultural settings and different degrees of intensiveness.

Within these variables the basic teaching/learning approach could be described as constant, the objective of the courses being the mastering of subject content rather than language. The project was therefore an example of a virtually 100% 'rough input' approach, the content being selected and presented to be as far as possible comprehensible to the learners, the output being in the form of meaningful communicative activities. A marked feature typical of immersion approaches elsewhere was the use by the teachers only of the language being learned without explanations in the native language of the learners.

IV.2.2.1 Comments on the Statistical Analysis

Overall the statistical results of the proficiency tests (independently devised and assessed) were promising for the use of immersion approaches. On several of the measures the immersion groups proved significantly superior to the control groups. Equally significantly, they at no point performed more poorly than the control groups. (There was one exception though the reason for this seems clear). Looking at these results in greater detail:

1. In China the 'intermediate' immersion group proved significantly superior in the oral test (listening and speaking) and tended towards being significantly superior in the written test, - (by the Chinese statistical analysis they were, in fact, significantly superior).

Taking the nature of all the tests into account the GFLU lecturers interpreted this to mean that the immersion group had proved to be significantly superior in communicative proficiency.

2. The GFLU lecturers further deduced that this was a developing trend and expressed surprise that it has shown up so clearly in one semester. They regretted that the administrative difficulties encountered had confined the trials to those time limits and felt that, encouraging as the results were for immersion, they would have been even clearer if the full year's course, as originally planned, had been possible.
3. While final numbers in the ECU intermediate immersion course allow no firm conclusion the indications there are similar to those in Guangzhou. The immersion group was significantly better in the written section of the proficiency test with the oral (listening and speaking) being the next closest to significance. Post-course analysis by students and teachers suggested that there could have been more conversational interaction and role plays. This was taken into account in the planning and implementation of the follow-up ECU studies in 1993. The initial immersion course was looked on as a pilot study exploring the parameters of the model.

4. Arising from this analysis was the conclusion that the 'rough input' of the ECU intermediate course had probably been at slightly too advanced a level, had over-emphasised the listening and writing skills and the mastery of subject content rather than the communicative output which would have demonstrated this.
5. The immersion course for beginners at ECU was of particular interest as doubts have often been expressed about the suitability of immersion approaches for beginning adults. Ignoring for the moment the intensive immersion course, the results are very much in line with the intermediate level results at Guangzhou. The immersion group was significantly better (than the control group) in listening and speaking and was no worse in reading. Thus again, communicatively, those exposed to the immersion approach proved some superiority. This result probably also justifies the criticism of the intermediate ECU course and shows that with these modifications listening/speaking skills improve markedly.
6. However, this trial also provided the single instance in which the control group proved superior to the immersion group ie. in writing. This **does**, of course stand in contrast to the intermediate and Guangzhou results.

There are several possible explanations, all requiring further study. The first possibility which is almost certainly at least partially correct is that very little emphasis was placed on writing skills until fairly late in the course when students were under considerable pressures from business and personal sources. Equally likely is the fact that the full-time employment of such a high proportion of the students simply did not give the necessary time for the mastery of many characters. This is confirmed by studying the detailed results of individual students where it becomes clear that those not otherwise employed did better in the writing proficiency test. There remains, of course, the possible interpretation that immersion approaches with a script so markedly different from English may be less productive in the beginning stages of learning writing.

7. Within the limitation of this Project it is clear that linking immersion approaches to intensiveness did not prove effective. However before firm conclusions are drawn from this the limitations would have to be removed ie. intensiveness would have to be undertaken with the same situation for the immersion and control groups and, in particular, the employment situation and times of study would have to be equalised.
8. These results did not appear to be affected (except for 6 above) by the languages being learned, the hours of instruction (except for 7 above) or the different cultural situations.

IV.2.2.2 Student and teacher reactions

1. The first major contrast between Australia and China emerges in the area of student reactions to the immersion approach. The proportion of students withdrawing from the immersion course was much higher in China than in Australia. In the latter the retention rate was probably as high as could reasonably be expected. In China however the difference in approach from the traditional language courses they were accustomed to in middle school was too great for many students to accept. They simply did not believe they would learn much in a course that did not concentrate on grammar, usage, phrases and patterns.

Nevertheless it is to be noted that the students who did persist in China were delighted with the final outcomes, particularly in the skills of listening, speaking and reading. They expressed strongly the desire to continue with this type of programme in the future.

2. Two reactions noted in previous immersion studies with adults were clearly present both in Australia and in China. The first weeks of immersion work proved particularly difficult for students, especially for beginners in the language; this was the period when students were most likely to give up. There was a sense of being overwhelmed and this was not entirely absent even with the intermediate students.
3. The resultant emergence of supporting mechanisms and behaviour amongst class members was particularly evident in Australia. This extended to strong support for the less able students. While in the first instance there may have been a degree of indignation at the teachers 'not being more helpful', ie. not giving explanations in the native language or grammatical instruction, this tended to pass as the point of the approach was more and more accepted.
4. The Australian students were of the view that the 'purity' of the immersion approach did not have to be so totally adhered to. They felt it would not have compromised the basic principles of the approach to give an occasional brief English translation (eg of a word or phrase) or to explain a grammatical point, avoiding too many misunderstandings by doing so. It is a moot point whether such modifications could be adhered to in very infrequent ways or whether in fact the whole approach would be affected.
5. There is little doubt that the immersion approach achieved higher levels of motivation than the control group approach. This may have been an outcome of the interest the students found in the subject matter or may have been a reflection of the communicative and meaningful activities undertaken in these courses. Again the expressed preference was for continuing with the same type of course in the future.
6. Though there is no necessary tie-up with the immersion approach as such, the students in both China and Australia strongly approved of the team teaching approach employed.
7. These comments were largely endorsed by the teachers who after wide experience in many forms of more traditional approaches to teaching finished with a strong commitment to continue with the immersion approach.
8. The teachers stressed the need for very thorough preparation of the content material and specific approaches to be used. Particularly teachers need to be strongly prepared in immersion techniques. For this reason the second implementation proved much more successful not only in Australia but also in a sense in China where one of the two teachers had participated in the first semester of the second Australian course, helping to plan the course and teaching Mandarin through it.
9. Teachers noted a marked change in attitude to English studies in those undertaking the immersion course, particularly in China, with a higher degree of interest in the life and society of the countries being studied.

IV.2.2.3 International Cooperation

1. The project has been completed with a high measure of cooperation between the project teams and institutions involved. This has had the two-fold result of:
 - giving a good degree of confidence that the findings can be generalised to other languages and cultures
 - strengthening markedly the ties between the two institutions
2. As has been pointed out on several occasions such cooperation cannot be achieved cheaply. As well as the assistance given by DEET to the project (as 'targeted institutions') the universities concerned had to provide substantial support for the overall programme eg. ECU had to support through the provision of fares and living allowances the exchange programme for lecturers from GFLU to spend up to a year at ECU while GFLU had to provide accommodation and support for the ECU coordinator on his visits to Guangzhou to discuss the project and report.
3. To suggest that major projects of this sort can be undertaken without problems arising would be rather misleading. The most obvious problem in this case was in the implementation of the immersion course in China. Here the educational system proved a major obstacle. The strong ties to a national syllabus and importance of achieving to the required levels in national examinations made it impossible to use existing English classes within GFLU. Even to take the voluntary proficiency tests needed to evaluate the courses was resisted. It is a tribute to the work of the project team at GFLU that the try-out was implemented even if somewhat later and more briefly than had initially been planned.
4. In a final meeting with the ECU coordinator the GFLU departmental and University authorities strongly urged the continuation if not of this project, then certainly of similar cooperative ventures between the two institutions.

IV.2.2.4 Applications and Conclusion

1. At GFLU the project team is recommending a change to the structure of English courses in the University as a result of the findings of this study. At the minute what might be called immersion courses (eg. Australian studies) etc are only implemented in the final year or years of courses. It is now the view of the team that such studies could be profitably implemented in earlier years of English courses.

Taking into account the atmosphere and expectations in China they are not recommending the abandonment of present core courses though they do suggest certain modifications in these. More importantly they now suggest that there is much to be gained by implementing parallel content/immersion courses in first and second years of university work for English major students. If implemented this could result in a considerable change in course structures at GFLU and, they feel, in a marked improvement in proficiency in English.

2. At ECU there is considerable interest in the outcomes so far of the immersion project. Before proceeding with any major changes the Department of Language Studies would like to see the results confirmed through a tighter control of the experimental variables. It is therefore proposed that in 1996 instead of setting up a class for volunteers the first year Mandarin class should be randomly divided into two, and the immersion/control groups

implemented with minor modifications to the immersion course as recommended by the staff and students.

Should this prove successful it could result in considerable restructuring of the first year course and in extended trials of similar programmes with the other languages being taught at ECU.

3. The results from these extended and international studies suggest that immersion approaches could prove as profitable at university level as they have proved to be at primary and secondary school levels.

The findings are sufficiently encouraging to allow for the proposal that these trials should be extended with emphases on:

- * a more rigorous control of variables
- * a more developed corpus of content materials suitable to different levels of university work.
- * training programmes for teachers considering employing immersion approaches
- * a wider range of languages to be investigated in a range of educational and cultural settings.

APPENDIX A

Project and Teaching Teams

EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

Project Team

Professor Ian Malcolm
Dr Toby Metcalfe
Mr Wolfgang Frick
Dr Ang Tian Se
Professor Zhou Zhaoqi
Ms Zou Jiping
Dr Alastair McGregor

Teaching Teams

‘Intensive’ Trials’

Ms Zou Jiping
Professor Zhou Zhaoqi (visiting scholar)
Ass Professor Qian Jian Ping
Mr Wolfgang Frick
Ms Winnie Chang
Dr Alastair McGregor (Coordinator)

‘Immersion’ Trials (1993)

Ms Zou Jiping
Mr Ye Zhen Qian (GFLU exchange scholar)
Mr Liu Xiang Fu (GFLU exchange scholar)
Dr Alastair McGregor (Coordinator)

‘Immersion’ Trials (1994)

Ms Zou Jiping
Mr Liu Xiang Fu (GFLU exchange scholar)
Ass Professor Zhu Liyi (GFLU exchange scholar)
Mr Wolfgang Frick
Dr Alastair McGregor (Coordinator)
Ms Alicia Yen (Assessor)

Guangzhou Foreign Language University

Project Team

Professor Xiao Hui Yen
Professor Fang Jianzhueng
Professor Wang Guizheng
Professor Chen Jian Ping
Mr Liu Xiang Fu
Ass Professor Cai Yun (Coordinator)

Teaching Teams (for 1992 and 1994 courses)

Mr Liu Xiang Fu
Associate Professor Cai Yun (Coordinator)

APPENDIX B

Evaluation Form

Chinese Immersion Class

Semester 2, 1993

Rather than submit a journal on this occasion we would be most grateful if each member of the class would submit comments under the headings as below. Please hand in **NO LATER THAN THE WEEK BEGINNING 20TH SEPTEMBER**. Feel free to attach other sheets if you wish to make more comments.

Name: (please print)

Please comment on:

1. The level of texts/language being used in the class, from the point of view of your ability to handle it and usefulness to you:
2. Attempts are being made to use such activities as role-play. Would you comment on this:
3. How are you finding such activities as listening to tapes then asking questions (either the lecturer asking or you):
4. Occasionally English is used for specific purposes. Do you have any views on this?
5. How useful are you finding the content of the lessons? Could you be reasonably specific?
6. Is the course and the approaches being used what you expected from an 'immersion' course? If not, what would you wish to see included?
7. Apart from content (5 above) are you benefiting in any other ways from the course? In what ways (if any)?

Any other comments (please feel free to add other sheets)?

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