

add.a.lingua foreign language terminology



Majority language: The majority language refers to the language most widely spoken in a given area.

Minority language: The minority language refers to a language that is used by a group of people living among the majority language speakers

Based on well-researched language acquisition theory, the following immersion models currently exist:

- **Full or total immersion:** In this model, majority language speakers begin by receiving 100% of their instruction in a minority language (most often Spanish in the United States). In grades K-1, children learn to read first in the immersion language. The instruction time in the immersion language decreases by percents as the students progress through elementary school. By fifth or sixth grade immersion students continue to receive at minimum 50% of their instruction in the immersion language. Various “maintenance” models exist after the fifth or sixth grade.
- **Partial immersion:** In this model, majority language speakers receive about 50% of instruction in the immersion language. This percentage remains consistent throughout elementary school. Students learn to read in both languages in the lower grades.
- **Double immersion:** This is a full or total immersion program using two minority or non-native languages.
- **Two-way or dual immersion:** This model has an equal emphasis on two languages and depends on an equal distribution of two native language populations. This model began in Dade County, Florida with about half their students native Spanish speakers and the other half native English speakers. In this model, the students receive instruction in the early elementary years primarily in Spanish with both the native Spanish-speakers and English-speakers experiencing Language Arts in Spanish first. By combining two language groups, dual immersion seeks to place equal value on the languages of instruction and depends on students from each language group interacting and learning from one another.

FLES: This acronym stands for Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools. In this program, schools begin to teach language at the elementary level. A well articulated FLES program often begins in Kindergarten and focuses on building vocabulary and communication skills each year until the eighth grade. FLES programs may take on characteristics of an immersion program by reinforcing content already taught in the grade levels, thereby calling it “content-enriched” instruction. FLES programs must meet between 90 and 120 minutes per week in order to reach most State standards of two foreign language credits upon graduating from high school and a novice-high level of proficiency on the ACTFL scale.

FLEX: This acronym stands for Foreign Language Experience or Exploratory. In these programs, teachers, often assisted by technology allow students to “try out” several different languages before choosing their area of focus. True proficiency is not likely attainable.

Research suggests ... that students in full and dual immersion programs are more orally proficient and reach higher academic levels in both the minority and majority languages than those participating in partial immersion programs.

References:

- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. www.actfl.org.
- Center For Applied Linguistics. www.cal.org.
- National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (2006). *Standards for foreign language learning in the 21st century*. Lawrence, KS: