Scaffolding
Writing: Examining The Stages Of An Essay

PRE-READING DISCUSSION

Discuss the following questions in groups

a. What is the best way to learn English?
b. What sort of difficulties does an international student encounter when learning English?
c. In what ways would learning English from a very young age assist an international student?
d. What sort of things can be done to enhance a student’s English learning?

EXAMINING THE STAGES OF AN ESSAY

An essay often gives an opinion and supports it with evidence from research. The following exercises will help you to understand the structure of an essay

ESSAY QUESTION: Discuss the use of English as the language of instruction in full-immersion schools where English is not the community/official language (and the effect this may have in diminishing a child’s connection to their own culture.)

MODEL ESSAY

Learning a second language can be a difficult and stressful process for a non-native English speaker. There are many ways to learn English as a second language. One way of overcoming some difficulties of learning English is to expose children to full-immersion schools, where instruction in all subject areas at school is conducted in English. There are positive aspects of full-immersion schools such as ease of learning due to the more “natural” approach to learning. However, there are also a number of significant negative aspects such as the possibility of a loss of connection to a child’s own culture and exposure to often opposing attitudes. Therefore, this essay argues that full-immersion schools seriously impair a child’s ability to relate to their own culture because of the way language is tied to cultural attitudes and customs.

Using English as the medium for teaching in schools has several positive consequences for students. The major positive effect is that the English language can be absorbed more spontaneously through this method. Research has shown that learning a language through immersion schooling can accelerate the rate at which a student can effectively function on a daily basis in an English speaking environment (Beckman 2002). What is more, it is this constant use of English in schooling that leads to more confident, able and natural speakers of English who are more likely to operate fluently and effectively in English. Barone (cited in Nalder & Rossetti 2005, p 32) noted for example that students in the middle years of an Italian senior school who had been exposed to some degree of immersion schooling in years 6 and 7 were more likely to respond positively to classroom interaction in English than their peers who had not had such exposure. It can be seen then that here is some evidence to show full immersion English schooling for non-native English speakers can have some positive consequences.
If one looks closely at the literature on this topic, however, there are a number of important negative aspects to the full-immersion schools method. One of these is the prospect of students embracing very different cultural outlooks and understanding — or worldviews — when they are exposed to very different customs and attitudes. These may well conflict with cultural understandings in their own language and culture. As language is closely tied to cultural understanding, there is the danger that cultural norms embedded in English language study could influence impressionable students to accept these and even deny their own language and culture’s ideas. Native American students who have attended in English language education schools in North America have been shown to accept and embrace American attitudes to the detriment of their own Native American history and world view (Sherman 2006). Allied to this is the further problem of a loss of connection to one’s own culture for students who are exposed to this type of education. Studies of Pitjantjatjara-speaking Aboriginal students from Central Australia found that those middle school students educated in English-speaking schools often display higher levels of opposition and resentment when engaging in community cultural activities than their peers who underwent schooling in the Pitjantjatjara language (Bairnsdale 1999). Hoolihan and Green (2001) found similar conclusions from studies of indigenous Hawaiian students and a smaller Swedish case study of Sami people raised comparable concerns (Skoll 2004). It is clear that, as language is tied to cultural understandings of the world, instruction in schools should be consistent with a student’s cultural heritage and history in order to counter the possible negative consequences of exposure to what may well be alien world views.

Therefore, although English as the medium of instruction can have positive effects in terms of more natural uptake of language for a non-native English speaker, the full-immersion method of schooling arguably has adverse effects in terms of connection to culture, language and way of looking at the world. The effects seem especially profound on young and often impressionable students. With the growing pressure in non-English speaking countries in recent years for students to learn English, more and more parents are sending school-aged students to be exposed to English language instruction in upper primary and high schools in English speaking countries. Little research has been done in this new area, but a recent study of a small cohort of 16 year old high school students from Japan, who had lived and studied in Australia, found they encountered difficulties adjusting to life when returning to their home country (Lonergan 2004). Similarly, 77% of a group of Asian students in mainstream Australian schools for one to two years while a parent attended language classes in the country chose to complete their schooling in Australia rather than return with a parent (Johns 2008). Although some authors argue that full-immersion schools produce more natural speakers of a language, Lims (2008) has tied this ability to talent and quality of instruction rather than schooling. He found little statistical difference in the abilities of a group of students in full immersion schools as compared to a group in mainstream schools when intelligence and diligence were taken into account. He further points out that it is students with a natural affinity for languages who choose to remain in full immersion schools for the duration of their schooling. While attempts to make language learning an easier and more effective process are commendable, if the way this is done leads to diminishing connections to a learner’s own culture, it can be argued the costs are too high. Parents who value the dissemination of cultural norms and practices from their own culture should consider the larger ramifications a full immersion school education could have on their children’s world view.

In conclusion, language is intimately tied to cultural understanding and the difficulty of separating the two in full-immersion schooling means that any instruction in English will ultimately lead to loss of connection with one’s own culture and language. While immersion school practices have positive consequences and reflect a natural method of language learning, there are clearly negative impacts on a young student’s worldview. As a person throughout their life usually holds a worldview, so parents should consider the possible adverse consequences of full-immersion schools when making decisions about their child’s education. Secure psychological and social development and membership of a community need to be weighed against any financial prosperity based on communicating in English in the future.
**INTRODUCTION**

Read the introduction to the essay and answer the following questions

a. What is the topic of the essay?  
b. Which sentences provide a background to the topic?  
c. What is the opinion of the writer?  
d. What parts of the topic will be included in the essay?  
e. What is the purpose of the introduction?

Learning a second language can be a difficult and stressful process for a non-native English speaker. There are many ways to learn English as a second language. One way of overcoming some difficulties of learning English is to expose children to full-immersion schools, where instruction in all subject areas at school is conducted in English. There are positive aspects of full-immersion schools such as ease of learning due to the more “natural” approach to learning. However, there are also a number of significant negative aspects such as the possibility of a loss of connection to a child’s own culture and exposure to often opposing attitudes. Therefore, this essay argues that full-immersion schools seriously impair a child’s ability to relate to their own culture because of the way language is tied to cultural attitudes and customs.

**BODY**

**FIRST BODY PARAGRAPH**

a. What is the main idea of this paragraph?  
b. How does the writer support the main idea in this paragraph?  
c. How does the writer end this paragraph?  
d. How does the writer link ideas within the paragraph?

Using English as the medium for teaching in schools has several positive consequences for students. The major positive effect is that the English language can be absorbed more spontaneously through this method. Research has shown that learning a language through immersion schooling can accelerate the rate at which a student can effectively function on a daily basis in an English speaking environment (Beckman 2002). What is more, it is this constant use of English in schooling that leads to more confident, able and natural speakers of English who are more likely to operate fluently and effectively in English. Barone (cited in Naldera & Rossetti 2005, p 32) noted for example that students in the middle years of an Italian senior school who had been exposed to some degree of immersion schooling in years 6 and 7 were more likely to respond positively to classroom interaction in English than their peers who had not had such exposure. It can be seen then that here is some evidence to show full immersion English schooling for non-native English speakers can have some positive consequences.

**SECOND BODY PARAGRAPH**

Read the second paragraph of the body of the essay.

a. What is the main idea of this paragraph?  
b. How does the writer support the main idea in this paragraph?  
c. How does the writer end this paragraph?  
d. How does the writer link ideas within the paragraph?

If one looks closely at the literature on this topic, however, there are a number of important
negative aspects to the full-immersion schools method. One of these is the prospect of students embracing very different cultural outlooks and understanding – or worldviews – when they are exposed to very different customs and attitudes. These may well conflict with cultural understandings in their own language and culture. As language is closely tied to cultural understanding, there is the danger that cultural norms embedded in English language study could influence impressionable students to accept these and even denigrate their own language and culture’s ideas. Native American students who have attended in English language education schools in North America have been shown to accept and embrace American attitudes to the detriment of their own Native American history and world view (Sherman 2006). Allied to this is the further problem of a loss of connection to one’s own culture for students who are exposed to this type of education. Studies of Pitjanjatjara-speaking Aboriginal students from Central Australia found that those middle school students educated in English-speaking schools often display higher levels of opposition and resentment when engaging in community cultural activities than their peers who underwent schooling in the Pitjanjatjara language (Bairnsdale 1999). Hoolihan and Green (2001) found similar conclusions from studies of indigenous Hawaiian students and a smaller Swedish case study of Sami people raised comparable concerns (Skoll 2004). It is clear that, as language is tied to cultural understandings of the world, instruction in schools should be consistent with a student’s cultural heritage and history in order to counter the possible negative consequences of exposure to what may well be alien world views.

a. How many paragraphs does the body have? b. How has the writer sequenced the body paragraphs? c. What is the purpose of this section of the essay? d. How does the author link ideas between paragraphs?

**THIRD BODY PARAGRAPH**

a. What is the main idea of this paragraph? b. How does the writer support the main idea in this paragraph? c. How does the writer end this paragraph? d. How does the writer link ideas within the paragraph?

Therefore, although English as the medium of instruction can have positive effects in terms of more natural uptake of language for a non-native English speaker, the full-immersion method of schooling arguably has adverse effects in terms of connection to culture, language and way of looking at the world. The effects seem especially profound on young and often impressionable students. With the growing pressure in non-English speaking countries in recent years for students to learn English, more and more parents are sending school-aged students to be exposed to English language instruction in upper primary and high schools in English speaking countries. Little research has been done in this new area, but a recent study of a small cohort of 16 year old high school students from Japan, who had lived and studied in Australia, found they encountered difficulties adjusting to life when returning to their home country (Lonergan 2004). Similarly, 77% of a group of Asian students in mainstream Australian schools for one to two years while a parent attended language classes in the country chose to complete their schooling in Australia rather than return with a parent (Johns 2008). Although some authors argue that full-immersion schools produce more natural speakers of a language, Lims (2008) has tied this ability to talent and quality of instruction rather than schooling. He found little statistical difference in the abilities of a group of students in full immersion schools as compared to a group in mainstream schools when intelligence and diligence were taken into account. He
further points out that it is students with a natural affinity for languages who choose to remain in full immersion schools for the duration of their schooling. While attempts to make language learning an easier and more effective process are commendable, if the way this is done leads to diminishing connections to a learner’s own culture, it can be argued the costs are too high. Parents who value the dissemination of cultural norms and practices from their own culture should consider the larger ramifications a full immersion school education could have on their children’s world view.

CONCLUSION

a. Which sentence restates the author’s opinion? b. Which sentence presents a summary of the main points covered in the essay? c. What is the purpose of the conclusion? d. How does the writer end the conclusion? e. How does the writer signal the conclusion?

In conclusion, language is intimately tied to cultural understanding and the difficulty of separating the two in full-immersion schooling means that any instruction in English will ultimately lead to loss of connection with one’s own culture and language. While immersion school practices have positive consequences and reflect a natural method of language learning, there are clearly negative impacts on a young student’s worldview. As a person throughout their life usually holds a worldview, so parents should consider the possible adverse consequences of full-immersion schools when making decisions about their child’s education. Secure psychological and social development and membership of a community need to be weighed against any financial prosperity based on communicating in English in the future.

References


