English Language Program
Beyond the classroom experience

Cintana Guidelines
for

Academic **Social** **Cultural**

Immersion

Introduction

English language acquisition is a key element in higher education, which clearly reinforces the readiness of graduates to be successful in the labour market and in their future careers. In this sense, the Cintana model offers some recommendations which can complement the curricular courses that most academic programs include, supporting the students´ development to ensure that they communicate competently in social and professional contexts. This educational guide proposes immersion opportunities in the English language by suggesting cultural and academic tasks to complement students' studies. The guide is a hands-on resource through which faculty members can complement the learner's formal education creatively. Each of the activities can be adapted according to the needs of the learner and the professor.

The main pedagogical support behind this educational guide is Experiential Learning. It is based on Kolb's learning cycle, in which the learner should start in the experience, will then reflect on the experience, and then conceptualize and assimilate learning that can be applied in the next experience. Experience-based education will also have other possible benefits beyond language acquisition, like easing the transition from university to work. Additionally, the community service experiences proposed in the guide can prepare students to be more engaged citizens.

This educational guide considers language immersion as an expression of experiential learning. Beyond the theoretical support of experiential learning, language immersion has proven benefits. It is undoubtedly the kind of experience most teachers recommend, and most learners aspire to have. Language immersion is an effective learning method, which results in higher and faster English language proficiency. By being fully immersed in real English language contexts, learners will have a valuable opportunity to develop deeper levels of comprehension, and to increase fluency and confidence in using the language.

Language immersion implies real life activities in which learners develop their ability to communicate competently in the English language. However, unless learners study English in an English speaking country, they will typically not have the opportunity to practice their language skills outside the academic environment, which limits their ability to apply what they learn in the English classes or books, reduces the sources of learning and hinders the ultimate purpose of language acquisition.
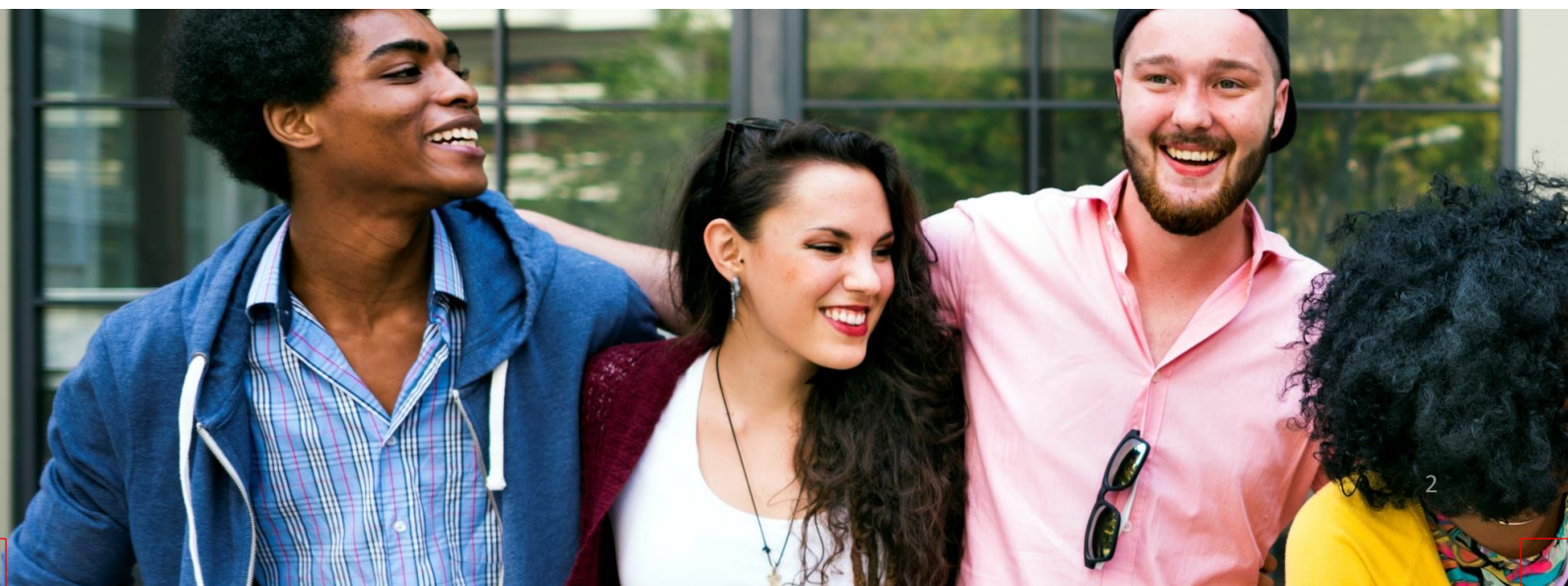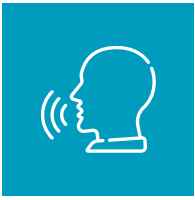
Despite the limitations of not being in an English-speaking territory, there are opportunities to help students be immersed in English speaking contexts on which this guide will focus, like the presence of international students on campus, the access to academic and professional resources and events through internet, or the organization of academic activities where English is the language of communication.

Bilingual programs offer a great opportunity for language immersion, where the second language is not taught in isolation, but in real connection to the student´s interest and future professional aspirations. In bilingual programs, students can enrol some courses that are fully delivered in English, which will provide an exceptionally rich language learning environment. However, before getting there, students will typically need to work on their English language and get ready to enrol courses that will be delivered in English after some time into the program, which makes language immersion even more important since day one. In bilingual programs, language immersion can be used as a complementary mechanism to accelerate the readiness of students for a successful learning experience in the courses that are offered in English.

This educational guide is divided into two types of immersion activities: academic immersion and cultural/social immersion. Academic immersion suggests three types of activities: Attending a lecture, attending classes, attending webinars. The activities in this part of the guide aim to promote experiential learning in a professional environment. The cultural/social immersion basically includes activities related to student life.

The approach to assessment is open in all of the activities. Faculty could give the activity satisfactory on receipt of the task, or assign a mark that counts towards the student's assessment, always considering the student's original level of English and the learning objectives stipulated in the language course in which the learner is enrolled. Professors could also rely on qualitative feedback, peer reviews and self-assessment.

Academic immersion activities

Academic immersion activities represent a great opportunity for students to enhance their university experience by participating in events that are related to the area of knowledge and the future professional field of their choice. The purpose of this section is to suggest activities that could complement the learner in two fundamental ways: 1. By supporting the learner's knowledge of the subject matter 2. By enhancing the learner's knowledge of the English language through language immersion.

By participating in such activities, students will be able to not only learn about their academic disciplines, but will also be able to improve their English language proficiency by

| Developing their listening skills | Expanding their technical vocabulary | Enhancing communication skills, both written and oral |

For each one of the proposed activities, this guide will be recommending some possible pedagogical approaches that can inspire faculty regarding the design of each learning experience. Some faculty will find that some of the learning approaches and tasks are completely interchangeable and should feel free to use the recommendations according to their own needs and requirements.

Regarding assessment, faculty can opt between the two following alternatives:

| simply confirming the student´s participation, or the delivery of the related assignment, registering the activity as satisfactory performance | incorporating some grading of the student's assignment according to some specific rubric, which should be adapted to the original level of English language proficiency and concrete learning outcomes of the English language course in which the students are enrolled. |

It is also important to note that the examples referred to in this section are limited to the Business/Management field. The only purpose of such examples is to illustrate the activities proposed, but there will always be many other academic fields where the same pedagogical approach can be taken.

Attending conferences

Attending conferences represents an excellent opportunity for students to acquire knowledge in their respective academic fields and professional interests. They bring together people with a shared interest, and they typically extend for several days, offering a great variety of interventions and activities that can also constitute a suitable environment for the enhancement of language skills.

Face to face conferences offer an immersive opportunity, where experiential learning can take place to a much greater extent. However, the availability of online conferences will always be higher, particularly in remote or rural areas, and they will possibly be more affordable than face to face events.

Thousands of International Business conferences are organised every year. As an example, the 2021 Global Innovation Forum (https://giflondon.com/) constitutes an exciting event that our students could attend and benefit from.

As a starting point, students should register and upload their registration confirmation on the course LMS. Below is one possible design of this learning experience, which can always be modified/enriched by creative instructors.

Suggested learning approach:

After attending the conference, students could be required to do one or several of the following tasks. The tasks could be prescribed, or students could be asked to select one/several tasks by themselves:

- ✓ Students write a summary of the conference goals and contents.

- ✓ Students write a summary of their favourite session.

- ✓ Students write a summary of one particular session we identify, in this case, Salima Bhimani's session about Equity and Inclusion.

- ✓ Students participate in a 1:1 video session with another conference participant and produce a written summary of their conversation.

- ✓ Students participate in one of the scheduled digital workshops, where interactive learning through gamification and hands-on activities will occur. Students then send a brief written summary of key learnings and takeaways.

- ✓ Students join one of the scheduled virtual roundtables for small group discussions with experts on some topic. Then they send a brief written summary of key learnings/takeaways.

- ✓ Students create a glossary of 10 new business terms they learnt during the conference.

- ✓ Students produce a written report of their activities and rate their level of interest and satisfaction.

Attending classes

This kind of activity can take place in universities whose academic offer includes courses that are delivered in the English language. This initiative will require some degree of institutional coordination and the support of academic leaders, since it will imply that English language students will attend some of the classes of those courses that are delivered in English without being formally enrolled in them. Some faculty may be more open to this initiative and will be supportive of it, integrating English language students in the learning experience more effectively than others. Some may think that their classes could be disturbed by the presence of English language students, and would even prefer not to participate.

Ideally, though it may not be limited to, the subjects should be related to the academic program of study of the English students. Sometimes it will be possible to let the students choose what subjects to attend, other times the scheduling may be fixed and the subjects prescribed.

One of the most remarkable aspects of attending classes is that the learner truly develops autonomous learning. Also, learning in class is supported by the connections learners make to what the teacher conveys through theories and examples. The models that the teacher proposes are based on real-life, which makes the learning experience memorable. The lectures that learners attend facilitate discussions encouraging them to assimilate a variety of perspectives and ways of understanding concepts in English.

Like in the section before, the tasks described below refer to Business related classes for illustrative purposes, but both professor and learner could adapt the guide's content to suit their needs in such a way that, following the curriculum guidelines set in the English language course in which the learner is enrolled, the professor could assign one or more of the suggested activities.

Suggested learning approach:

After attending a class, students could be required to do one or several of the following tasks. Like before, the tasks could be prescribed, or students could be asked to select one/several tasks by themselves:

✓ Students listen to a business lecture, identify the key ideas and write a summary of the lecture.

✓ Students listen to a business lecture and take notes using the Cornell Method. Students complete their notes by comparing them. Write a summary of key learnings and takeaways.

✓ Students listen to a business lecture and produce a mind map using Plectica (Free with registration).

✓ Students listen to a business lecture and note down their reflections on the following points: What did you feel during the lecture and at the end? What fundamental idea do you think the lecture was about? Was the professor clear in his or her arguments, and why? Which aspects of the lecture did you find most engaging and which less so?

- ✓ Students listen to a business lecture, examine all angles of the topic, and write a persuasive essay.

- ✓ Students listen to a business lecture and create a glossary of 20 new business terms they learnt during a lecture using ANKI. (Free software).

- ✓ Students listen to a business lecture, takes notes, and record themselves (video or audio), summing up the lecture in no more than 5 minutes. Students then send the recording to the professor.

- ✓ Students produce a written report of their activities and rate their level of interest and satisfaction.

Attending webinars

Webinars are an ideal tool to propose immersive activities in the English language, leading to engaging teaching and learning experiences. Webinars are fundamentally based on the interaction between students, experts, and ideas, where collective activities such as chats, polls, or question and answers are typically included.
An important benefit in the educational use of webinars is that registration is simple and sometimes unlimited. Learners often have the advantage of accessing materials and resources before, during and after the webinar, which makes it easy for learners to prepare for the webinar or access the content for future viewing at their own pace.
In addition to having the same advantages as online classes, webinars offer the possibility of reaching a broader group of participants with shared interests, from any background and geographical precedence. Thanks to webinars, learners can participate in additional language immersion activities without distance being a problem. In this way, learners can expand their knowledge, competencies, and skills in the English language, which can complement their main field of study.

Needless to say, that the more interaction between learners, the better the understanding of the English content and subject of the webinar. Consequently, webinars are an effective way for learners to advance their English language knowledge and skills.

The fact that learners can register for a webinar on a topic directly related to their life or professional environment suggests that the choice available to students can grow exponentially.

Suggested learning approach:

Before or after participating in a webinar, students could be required to do one or several of the following tasks. Like before, the tasks could be prescribed, or students could be asked to select one/several tasks by themselves. The activities below aim to offer professors and students ways to extend the teaching and learning process creatively. These tasks could be adapted depending on the professor's and learner's needs.

- ✓ Students attend a webinar, take notes, and later explain its content to other students. The students can do this in person or online, a recording of the session may be requested.

- ✓ Students attend a webinar, summarise its content on a podcast and share it with the professor.

- ✓ Students complete an online quiz based on a webinar they have attended. They may be asked to provide reasoning for their answers.

- ✓ Students attend a webinar. The professor sends them an incomplete concept map based on a webinar. Students are asked to fill in the blanks to build a complete map. (Mindmeister free registration)

- ✓ The professor runs an online forum discussion concerning what students learned in a webinar and/or how to apply it.

- ✓ Students write a one-page summary of a webinar in their own words identifying the main ideas. Students send it to the professor.

- ✓ Students reflect on a webinar and share their posts in a discussion board.

- ✓ Students create a glossary 20 new terms they learnt during the webinar.

- ✓ Students write a short newspaper article about the webinar.

- ✓ Students write an email to a webinar expert with specific questions. Students send the question and the answer to the professor.

- ✓ Students ask questions to a guest speaker in a live session webinar using the chat.

- ✓ Students produce a written report of their activities and rate their level of interest and satisfaction.

Social & cultural
immersion activities

The goal of social and cultural immersion in this guide is to improve the students´ English language skills while gaining a deep understanding of the surrounding culture and experiencing life on campus. This integration fosters intercultural competence by providing experiential learning opportunities and encouraging engagement with cultures and environments different from their own, as well as by bonding with other students of shared interests. It is essential to encourage the participation of all students, both national and international, as the experience will be enriching for both.

Although this guide only presents a few examples, there is an uncountable number of activities that universities can organize. They will not only help with language practice, but will support the development of students as the future professionals that will work in the diverse and interconnected world we live in. This educational guide proposes a series of activities that aim to deploy intercultural immersion options that foster intercultural competence and respect for different cultures through experiential learning. Additionally, friendship should also be an expected outcome that will occur naturally in many cases.

Experiences can be built around themes or places of geographic, cultural, or historical significance. It is also advised to design activities around current events or critical issues that affect student's lives.

Like in the previous section, the outcome of the English language activity should be adapted to the level of the students and particular learning outcomes. Assessment also needs to be defined, in terms of simple participation, or related to some assignment that the English faculty may request.

Student clubs & associations:

A first example of social immersion could be Student Clubs. Very often universities have student clubs, whose activities can represent a great opportunity to not only have fun and meet other students, but to also practice and learn English. Like in the case of some of the academic activities, linking English language immersion with the clubs will require some institutional coordination, since it will be a requirement that the social/cultural activities take place in English. Typically the English language department, the international office and the student life office will have to be involved in the organization.

One common type of student club is the Movie Club. If there is a movie club at the university, maybe some of the selected movies should be projected in English, followed by a discussion forum that should also be conducted in English.

The aim is for students to communicate and bond with each other in English. Through this, students can develop knowledge and discover interests in previously unknown subjects. The film should be appropriate to inspire discussion, as a good film offers many opportunities for language immersion. To do this, students should be analytical and thorough. They should also feel free to ask questions and make any comments about the film. In this way, students will debate with opposing opinions and arguments that will enrich the experience.

Students should recognise and express their emotional reactions to the film or other artistic stimuli for the discussion to be productive. Students also learn about film as an art form by paying attention to the visuals or the script. Watching movies can immerse students in other cultures too.

Films motivate students to become more involved in learning, and, usually, a large majority of them are encouraged to comment on their impressions. They learn to consider other points of view through discussion and realise that their peers understand the film differently. This is a moment in which the students perceive their individuality.

Particularly motivated students could be asked to even write a film review after watching a film. A blog could also be created for the film club to share discussions or reviews. The blog can also be used to spark discussions outside the classroom. Students should be involved in the choice of films. Another activity could be to read online reviews and compare them with their own. All this to provide an immersive discussion experience.

Media lab

Some universities may have Media labs. This is an experimental educational laboratory that teaches the use of new media combined with art, culture and creativity. Activities should foster critical awareness, content creation through cooperation, social activism, education and technology.

The media lab, therefore, encourages fun and experimentation. Students will benefit from interacting and cooperating with other students inclined towards similar activities, thus providing an interdisciplinary educational exchange to acquire new competencies.

The media lab stands out for its openness to environments beyond the academy or the field of education, which enhances a transformation of thinking and cooperation. A media lab requires the relationship between teacher and student to be transformed so that the traditional hierarchical communication disappears completely, making it an anti-disciplinary learning experience that requires participants to develop different skills and competencies. .

These specific skills and competencies of each student will make the immersion an active and rewarding experience. Each participant with each of his or her skills will generate the dynamics necessary to achieve an optimal educational experience, as each student's contribution and combination will result in a potentially enriching experience. By creating adequate space for experimentation and cooperation, media labs encourage searching for solutions and sharing knowledge.

Numerous activities can be organized in the Media Lab: Learn to narrate with images, Learn how to edit videos, Explore the creative possibilities of photography, Make podcasts in a radio studio, etc.

The English corner

An interesting initiative can be to book, and label, some fixed space in the campus cafeteria, inviting students and faculty to connect with others at certain times for lunch or coffee. Participants can join guided or spontaneous conversations, as long as they are in English

Social responsibility activities

A socially conscious university must nurture and support students in their initiatives related to social responsibility. The QS book, 'The Rise in Social Responsibility in Higher Education' argues that to do this, the institution can:

Encourage philanthropy among the student body: volunteering, fundraising for student-led charities and community projects.

Distribute university funds for charitable giving.

Promote policies committed to social responsibility and inclusion and speak out against potential inequalities at the local, national and global levels.

The first one of these initiatives can easily be linked to English language acquisition. Below are a few suggested activities:

Cake Sale

Each year, students and faculty members will choose one ONG from a given list. The event will be held on three chosen days. Both teachers and students will make cakes and bring them to the centre where they will be exhibit and sold. The experience will always be conducted in the English language. At the end of the event, the money raised will be given to the chosen ONG.

Book Sale

Each year, students and faculty members will choose one ONG from a given list. The event will be held on three chosen days. During the event, both teachers and students will sell second-hand books accumulated throughout the year. This should always be done in the English language. At the end of the event, the money raised will be given to the chosen NGO.

There could be many other volunteer activities, like translating immigrant letters, English classes for immigrants, campus clean-up, recycling, etc. Anything, as long as English is the language of communication in them.

Engaging with international students

International students represent a wonderful opportunity for universities to create a really intercultural environment in which English language immersion will be a very natural aspect of campus life. Numerous educational, social, and cultural events can be organized and will provide memorable experiences and opportunities to make friends.

Multiple activities can be organized in the campus:

✓ Cultural events like the Culture Festival, where international students share their culture with the rest of the community. Art, music, food, social behaviours can be focused

✓ Discussion clubs to create conversations around cultures and values.

✓ Friendly competitions, in sports, music, theatre, entrepreneurship, etc.

✓ Scavenger hunt on the first day that helps international students become familiar with the campus.

✓ Dancing, or cooking classes.

✓ Dancing parties, Karaoke, Theatre plays, a special dinner…

✓ Also off campus activities can be organized, always a great occasion for international students to know the country and its culture better. Here are some examples of possible activities:

✓ Fun, free and safe alternatives to nightclubs and bars. These activities could include comedy shows.

✓ Guided tour of the downtown area, educational and cultural field trips around town, or the exploration of historical and other recreational and cultural sites

✓ Weekend trips to places outside around the city, or visits to local farms and parks

✓ Watching a movie in the theatre or outdoors, attending concert in the city or major sporting event, etc.