

LANGUAGE POLICY (SECONDARY SCHOOL)

Policy area: 2 – Teaching and Learning
Date last revised: June 2019

Date established: March 2013
Date of next revision: May 2021

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Head of School every two years, or more frequently if there are changes in policy. This policy was last reviewed and agreed by the Head of School in May 2019. It is due for review in May 2021.

Signed

Rose Threlfall
Head of School
Date: 17/06/19

Overview

Policy statement

Learning a language, be it the first or a second language, is central to expressing who we are as individuals and serves as both the medium and the means of learning in educational contexts.

Language is acquired in socio-cultural contexts allowing us to construct meaning, express our thoughts and develop our own value and belief system.

Purpose

This policy outlines the language provision at ICS (Secondary). The school recognises that embracing the learning of languages other than one's Mother Tongue provides students with the key to understanding their adopted countries and respective cultures.

Applicability

This policy applies to Secondary School teaching staff and students.

Access

This policy is available on request from the school offices. We also inform parents and guardians about this policy when their children join ICS, through our newsletters and our website.

The policy is provided to all staff (including temporary staff and volunteers) at induction alongside our ICS Professional Code of Conduct.

Language policy

1 Language philosophy

- 1.1 Language is an intrinsic element in the development of our cognition since it is not only a basic tool for communication but also a vehicle for the thoughts, ideas and beliefs we come to develop and express over time.
- 1.2 Researchers in the field of linguistics like Cummins (1979) Tikunoff (1985) and Snow (1989) have established a beneficial link between language proficiency and cognitive development. It is incumbent on us then, as educators, to ensure that students in our school are competent literate communicators in any social, cultural or educational context.
- 1.3 Many of our young students at International Community School could be called 'global nomads' (McCaig, 1992) and language is the currency that helps them gain entry to new schools, different cultures and value systems.
- 1.4 In response to the mobile nature of our global nomads the school fully supports the continued development of students' Mother Tongue, not just to nurture their communication and thinking skills but also to foster the spirit of the student's individuality and identity. Goldenberg (2008) explains *'that if both English and the Mother Tongue are valued and nurtured in a quality environment (additive bilingualism), students are likely to establish a strong foundation on which to build their second language proficiency.*
- 1.5 At ICS language learning is regarded as fundamental to all learning and will enable students to excel in a wide range of areas and contribute to the holistic experience the school curricula aim to promote.

2 English as the language of instruction

- 2.1 Upon admission to the Secondary School, all students are assessed for English language competency. The student's programme of study will be informed by the needs identified through this assessment. Students who demonstrate proficiency in English will study English as their Language A. Students who cannot demonstrate sufficient mastery of the language will take a different pathway:

Students' language proficiency is assessed against the Common European Framework of Reference. Students who are still developing and improving their English language skills and have achieved, at least, intermediate level, may study English as a second language namely, English Language Acquisition, as a core subject of the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP). Equally, students in the Diploma Programme who are not fully proficient in English will study English B as their second language choice while their Language A will be their Mother Tongue. Our programmes are structured, focused, needs-based, motivating and inclusive.

- 2.2 We offer teacher support to raise awareness of language issues, and individual learner support (through after-school English language tuition) to ensure that all

learners are able to participate and access the curriculum to their maximum potential.

- 2.3 For all learners, English language development is integrated within authentic contexts (subjects and units of inquiry), while some skills are taught separately, (e.g. spelling strategies, grammar skills and academic reading and writing skills).

3 The study of Language A English

- 3.1 At ICS, the aims of the teaching and study of Language A English are to encourage and enable students to use the language as a vehicle for thought, creativity, reflection, learning and self-expression. Through the study of a variety of different texts, students will understand more clearly aspects of their own culture and those of other cultures. Consequently, students will develop an appreciation of cultural differences in perspective. Furthermore, students will explore the many facets of the language through the use of media and information technology. Students will develop the skills involved in speaking, listening, reading, writing and viewing in a variety of contexts.

- 3.2 Students will develop a personal response to language and literature and be able to analyse texts critically.

- 4 All students' English level is assessed at the beginning of the academic year and sometimes at an earlier stage during the admission's process when students have not been studying through the medium of English. Where students' language proficiency in English falls between A2 and B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), additional support in English is also offered through extra tuition on a one to one basis after school and where possible, accommodated within the students' school day. Students aged fourteen to sixteen are expected to be fully integrated into the MYP from the beginning of the school year and where their English level is not proficient enough to study in the Language A programme, they will study English Language Acquisition, which is effectively English as a second language. These lessons are timetabled against English A to facilitate meaningful inclusion in the study of the MYP.

- 4.1 The development of students' English language acquisition forms an important component of the programme and is both the means and the medium by which students aged between 11-17 years can access the school curricula. The IB Middle Years and Diploma Programmes provide the framework for the approach to subject knowledge delivery while the focus of the English language support lessons is to equip students with the language discourse specific to the school subjects in the IB programmes.

4.2 Assessment

English Language Learners' (ELLs) proficiency levels are assessed and benchmarked against the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) competencies. Students do regular and continuous formative assessment tasks and end of unit tests to inform their progress in English skills using a modified form of the MYP criteria.

5 The study of Language B (Mandarin/Spanish/French/ English B)

- 5.1 Students are required to study a modern or second language – Language B/ Language Acquisition which, in the case of ICS, is either Spanish, Mandarin or French
As an IB MYP authorised school students in the full curriculum programme are required to be proficient in one language – language A, which is usually English. However, where students do not have a good command of English, the school offers English B at MYP level for students in MYP 4/5 where they need extra support in English language skills.
- 5.2 Bilingualism encourages a more developed awareness of language and as such all students gain advantage by learning an additional language.
- 5.3 Where students join the school before MYP4 and 5, they are encouraged to take up Language B Spanish, French or Mandarin.
- 5.4 Students are engaged in foreign language classes at all levels in the school. As well as developing competency in one or more foreign language(s), students also develop metalinguistic and linguistic skills, learning strategies, and an appreciation of different cultures.
- 5.5 Language classes are set into phases corresponding to beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. In order to allow for students to move up phases when appropriate, all language lessons take place at the same time for MYP 1/2/3 and MYP4/5. From 2013, phase 1 Mandarin Chinese has been taught in 2 years as recommended per the IB for character languages.
- 5.6 Mandarin is in place for all year groups up to and including MYP5
Spanish is in place for all years up to and including the DP students.

French was reintroduced in September 2017. Consequently, the language offer has been augmented at the MYP level and we now offer all three languages: Spanish, Mandarin and French.
- 5.7 The Language department offers an extensive range of programmes at Diploma level thus giving a wide choice for students. Both French and Spanish are offered at different levels respectively, Language AB Initio, Language B and Language A. We offer Mandarin at Language AB initio alongside the languages and levels aforementioned within the school curriculum.

6 Mother Tongue programme at ICS

- 6.1 Multilingualism is at the very heart of ICS's approach to education. It is believed that all teachers are language teachers ("Almost all education is language education" Postman 1996) and certainly promote the learning of a language in any of the following instances whether it be English as the school language of

instruction; French, Spanish and Mandarin as part of the language acquisition programme or the teaching of the Mother Tongue.

- 6.2 This endeavour to promote the learning of languages is best illustrated in the international identity of its staff and its open-minded attitude to languages through the languages spoken in the school as well as through language trips abroad for students. The variety of languages spoken in the School is an essential resource for students who first join ICS, as it is a first point of reference to seek support in the school and a way to promote the learning of languages in its strongest sense.
- 6.3 Some research shows evidence that the teaching of the Mother Tongue, alongside the other languages in the language acquisition programme and the language of instruction in the school, supports the academic progress of the other subjects learnt, as well as the cognitive development of students. The literacy of the Mother Tongue supports the literacy of the second language.
- 6.4 Learning a new language can be challenging. Through the Mother Tongue, the student can retain a high level of instruction and continue to develop cognitive abilities and academic skills. The teaching of the Mother Tongue programme gives students the sense of being valued and a sense of belonging. This also facilitates an easier reintegration into the student's own national system should this become necessary.
- 6.5 ICS fully supports the Mother Tongue programme by offering the formal teaching of their Mother Tongue to students who wish to continue study of their Mother Tongue. To date we have offered Arabic, French, Portuguese, Japanese and Greek as an example to individuals to MYP5 students. For Diploma level, we have offered Arabic, Dutch, Farsi- Persian, French, Malay, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Swedish to name but a few.
- 6.6 Aside from DP students who choose a Mother Tongue as one of their chosen subjects, students studying English in MYP 4 and 5 also have the opportunity to study their Mother tongue where they do not choose Language A English. Students who wish to continue their Language A in the other MYP year groups can study their Mother Tongue after the school day ends on a private tuition basis, if they so wish.
- 6.7 Mother Tongue teachers are recruited by the school through various online recruitment websites such the Times Educational Supplement. Tutors go through a rigorous interviewing process. The school prioritizes tutors with IB experience who are interviewed by the MYP and or Diploma coordinators, the Mother Tongue coordinator and/ or the Secondary Principal. We always aim to have experienced IB tutors on the team. Their experience has been utilized in training less experienced tutors through leading workshops.
- 6.8 There are occasions when a teacher leaves and it can be very difficult to find a replacement hence the need to build a bank of reliable tutors through direct recruitment. The Mary Langford network is another way of recruiting experienced IB tutors. Naturally, the language provision is reassessed every year according to the needs of our new students and we review the process of selection each year.

- 6.9 The Mother Tongue department consists of a coordinator to train and support the tutors throughout the year along with the ongoing input of the Diploma and MYP coordinators. The school provides support to the teachers through regular meetings to discuss any matters arising (writing reports, curriculum, fee structure, access to materials/ resources, ideas for teaching, etc.). The school offers advice and encourages the language tutors to adopt a personalized and tailored approach to the planning of their courses taking into account the background and levels of their students as well as their individual linguistic needs.
- 6.10 Tutors are integrated as much as possible with the rest of the staff and have been rewarded for the planning they produce. They are encouraged to research and build up resources for the school library to support the course they are teaching as well as promoting independent reading in the Mother Tongue to our students. The lessons take place after school from 3.45 pm onwards. This allows more flexibility for rooming. Self-taught students have two sessions of 45 minutes every week with their tutor.
- 6.11 The policy of the Primary and Secondary Mother-Tongue programmes is to encourage students to maintain their Mother Tongue and raise other students' awareness of cultural aspects. Whole-school events such as the 'Home Language Day' and 'International Day' foster curiosity among students about each other's language and culture and altogether a more holistic understanding of one another. Students take an active role in both events as they teach their own language to other students in the school and during the Primary Home Language Day, students from Secondary come in for a morning session to deliver a storytelling session to the younger students. During both events, students have to reflect on their own language and the strategies to take into account to make their delivery most effective. The Languages Department has been in charge of promoting languages and cultural diversity throughout the year through events and all school assemblies such as the Hispanic Day, Halloween vs The Day of the Dead in Mexico, The Chinese New Year and The Francophone Day.
- 6.13 Where possible students who have French or Spanish as a Mother Tongue (or some other languages that could be offered as Language B or AB Initio), can be paired up for 15/20 minutes sessions for free discussion to support students who are studying these two languages in the Language Acquisition Programme.
- 6.14 From the native speaker's point of view, it is a way to reflect on language learning and their own language. Socially, it facilitates integration in the DP groups and in some cases encouraged collaboration between DP and MYP. This initiative was also recognized by the school and rewarded the native speakers with CAS hours for a valuable contribution to the school community. This programme varies from one year to another depending on our student body.

7 School-wide objectives

- 7.1 The Head of English, alongside Curriculum Coordinators and other language teaching colleagues will work with school management to ensure:

- All students develop proficiency and academic literacy in English as the language of the host country and the language of instruction
- All lessons continue to have a language development focus to support students' mastery of English in a variety of contexts both academic and social
- The school promotes language learning opportunities for students who have varying levels of proficiency in English, Language B and Mother Tongue languages through directed and undirected school activities to enhance their communicative, social and academic literacy skills
- Language learning activities and policies are reviewed regularly, and further strategies developed to support and embed the principles of the language policy
- There are pathways for Language Learning for every student as described in Section 4 and 5 and 6 of this document.
- The school supports staff training in language awareness and language teaching methodologies through INSET training activities (e.g. training for EAL techniques within Faculty Training days as well as informal support from colleagues with expertise in language teaching.
- Literacy targets are set, monitored and reviewed each term for each year group
- Continue to work school wide to develop a language policy that is inclusive of Primary and Secondary school practices.

8. Student Support Department

Please note that for some students with specific language learning difficulties we may issue a language waiver in order for them to spend extra time learning English or their Mother Tongue. This is decided on an individual basis at the time of their first International Individual Learning Plan (IILP) meeting.

9 Library resources and how they connect with language learning

- 9.1 Within the ICS Secondary Library students have access to resources for the purpose of research and reading for pleasure. Non-fiction books are provided in English, as it is the language of instruction that is apart from literature studied in the Mother Tongue programme. We endeavour to provide for students with varied abilities in English by stocking reference books with different language levels. We also subscribe to Encyclopaedia Britannica online. This resource is ideal for ELLs as information is presented in articles at three different levels of language. Bilingual and visual dictionaries are available to aid comprehension.
- 9.2 At this point, the majority of fiction in the collection is also in English. We have a collection of High Interest / Low Ability books aimed at our ELLs. These books are particularly useful when students are in the early stages of language acquisition and need to work their way through a high number of short texts.

10 Referencing protocols

- 10.1 We use the MLA format for referencing work and generating bibliographies. As consistency is key in helping students to learn the importance of academic honesty,

staff are trained during induction in the format themselves. The librarian is available to come into any subject class to instruct pupils in the application of MLA and a booklet is provided which simplifies the process. This is primarily introduced to students in Humanities lessons where the research process is most explicit, however all subjects require that students follow the same protocols. Students are first introduced to these protocols in MYP1 and this is reinforced at every grade level both to embed the skills required and because we have a transient population with new students joining us throughout the year. Students are also trained in how to use referencing aides within software applications, e.g. Microsoft Word, which make the process easily accessible. The MYP Personal Project and Diploma Extended Essay provide a focal point for the use of these referencing skills, however it is our goal that students will already be confident in referencing before they reach these milestones. An understanding of Academic Honesty is core to the IB and to ICS' Academic Programme. As such, all students are familiar with the ICS Academic Honesty Policy document. Students are encouraged to discuss the ethical implications of Academic honesty and are made aware of the practical consequences of contravening school policy in this matter. The School's Academic Integrity Policy is shared with Parents, students and staff alike.

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