



ST. JOSEPH'S INSTITUTION INTERNATIONAL

A Lasallian Catholic School

St Joseph's Institution International High School, Singapore

Language Policy

The contents of this document have been compiled collaboratively by the school's Languages Faculty, the Mother Tongue Coordinator, the Head of English as a Second Language, the Admissions Officer, the IB Diploma Programme Coordinator as well as the Senior Leadership Team. Moreover, the views of parents and students (gathered through conversations and surveys) have informed the discussions that have in turn led to this policy.

The philosophy

We believe that all students should be given the opportunity to develop their mother tongue. We recognise the strength and the great benefits of learning one's mother tongue as well as of deepening understanding of one's own culture. The mother tongue language is an integral part of the student's identity and a strong connection to a home culture leads to "better self-esteem, intercultural awareness and international-mindedness" (IBO, 2009, p 30).

We also strongly believe that, in an ever-changing linguistic world, students should endeavour to achieve a high level of competence in two languages. This is shown through the continued studied of the mother tongue, and an additional language.

Not only does the study of two languages enable our students to communicate effectively in an increasingly global context, but it also empowers them to understand the cultures of other people. Through language learning, we expose students to various societies and people who speak and use these languages, thereby providing students with a more holistic understanding and appreciation of other languages.

The following are all important in implementing the Language Policy

- Students' background
- Language of instruction
- A second language/foreign language, Group 2
- Mother tongue support
- Support of library and other media
- Home support
- Assessments and feedback
- Professional development of teaching staff

Students' background

All students seeking admission to SJI International are interviewed and tested in English, and take a language paper for class placement in their additional language (if applicable) prior to joining SJI International. The language paper is not used as part of the decision-making process for admission to the school.

Students at SJI International are:

1. Singaporean Citizens who followed the education system of the Ministry of Education of Singapore prior to joining SJI International. In this system, the language of instruction is English. At SJI International they must continue to learn an approved mother tongue language (Chinese, Malay or Tamil), non-Tamil Indian Language or Mother Tongue-in-lieu (Japanese, German, French, Thai, Arabic).
2. Students whose first language is English. They may or may not have learnt a second or third language prior to joining SJI International.
3. Students whose first language is not English and who have been learning English as a second language (this is a small minority of the cohort).

The languages of teaching and learning

Since language is central to learning, all teachers are, in practice, language teachers with responsibilities in facilitating communication within and outside classrooms.

- **1st language English and other curriculum subjects**

English is used for teaching and learning amongst teachers and students.

In English classes, students focus on developing their language ability in all the four skills of the language, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing using various texts and media stimulus materials. As language is inseparable from culture, students learn the culture of the countries where English is the lingua franca. Literature in English is studied throughout the curriculum, from Grades 7-12.

In other subjects, the medium of instruction and communication in class is English. Assignments, experiments and assessments are done in English. The use of English in such an extensive and multidisciplinary way enables students to use the right language register and to be more aware of different vocabularies, styles, structures and presentations. In this way, students' command of English should improve dramatically.

Students also use English in developing their critical thinking skills and expressing thoughts in a cohesive, coherent and concise way. They also use English to argue their points, using substantial evidence and references.

- **English as a second language**

Students who have English as a second language (a small minority at the school) are given extra support either in class, in after-school support groups or through withdrawal from the curriculum, depending on need. Students in the Foundation IB programme are taught as ESL learners within the context of the mainstream classroom as part of a heavily differentiated curriculum.

Support for English as a second language is specific to need as identified on entry by assessment through the 'Oxford Placement Test'. Assessment is carried out every six months using the same tool to track progress and inform intervention.

- **1st Language LOTE and second/foreign languages**

Learning an additional language at SJI International is a compulsory part of our curriculum at all levels. In the classroom, teachers employ a range of active learning strategies in order to improve students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. It is a learner-centred approach which is not restricted to textbooks. Instead, students are exposed to various types of texts taken from a range of authentic materials. Students learn the language through diverse activities such as role-play, oral presentations and language games.

Within first language LOTE (Languages Other Than English) contexts, teachers and students use the target language exclusively for teaching and learning.

In classrooms where students are learning LOTE as a foreign or a second language, teachers have adopted an optimal position of target language use (as defined by Macaro, 1997). We believe that whilst teachers and students should always strive towards avoiding recourse to the students' first language (usually English), there is some value in teacher use of the student's first language through strategic codeswitching in order to contribute to learner interaction and learner output.

Students also learn the culture of the countries where the language is spoken so that they have a better understanding of the similarities and differences between their own culture and the culture of the language they are learning. In this way, students will have a positive attitude towards their own culture and that of others.

Students are placed in classes which best suit their current language attainment level. This enables all students to be taught appropriately. Regular checks are made that students are placed in the correct classes and changes made when appropriate.

Activities such as outings, talks and cultural corners are organised to enhance and support the learning of the language and the culture.

- **Enrichment**

Various outings and activities are provided for students which could serve to develop their language skills. For example, our school has a Debating team which offers students opportunities to participate in inter-school debates. All students in Grade 7, 9, 11 and 12 take part in a social service to improve their communication skills with a variety of stakeholders. Students of SJI International also have the opportunity to participate in school sports and a musical. Throughout the non-academic programme, students with English as their second

language are able to improve their command of the language through practical use.

There are also a wide variety of CCAs available which support students with their English language needs such as English mentoring and Study Skills, clubs for teaching Spanish and French language and culture, as well as Chinese conversational classes.

Spelling

The use of British spelling is required for all formal communication.

Referencing protocol and bibliographic style

Harvard referencing is required for all in-text and end-text referencing.

The languages of communication used in the school and outside the classroom

English is the main language spoken within the school community; however, any language is welcome to be used.

Mother Tongue

The school complies with Singapore Ministry of Education's MTL requirements for Singapore citizens (SC) and Permanent Residents (PR). All other pass holders do not come under the auspices of this policy.

- **Approved Mother Tongue Languages**

For SC and PR students, the Mother Tongue is determined by the Ministry of Education and students will be required to study this language through to the IB Diploma level (minimum Language B SL) as part of the school's curriculum unless they have a D 7 at Higher O'level Chinese, Malay or Tamil. Students can choose to change from one approved Mother Tongue Language (not an in-lieu Mother Tongue Language) to another approved Mother Tongue Language but this is subject to the School's approval. The intention should always be to aim for language continuity reaching the highest possible level of proficiency.

The school offers Chinese, Tamil and Malay as taught government approved Mother Tongue Languages. No additional documentation is required by SC or PRs taking these languages.

- **Government Approved Non-Tamil Indian Language (NTIL)**

If a student's mother tongue is a government approved NTIL (Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali or Urdu), they are encouraged to study this subject in school as part of the school's Home Language Programme. Students may choose, however, to take this outside of school. Students of these subjects are required to complete the O Level / IGCSE and A Level / Language B SL examinations in the appropriate language and furnish the school with the evidence that these exams have been taken and passed (D7 level for A Level). Parents are required to sign a letter taking responsibility for arranging tuition in the language (if taken outside of school) and for entering their child for the appropriate examinations. Failure to provide evidence of an appropriate pass in O Level / IGCSE will result in students not being

eligible for entry to the IB Diploma programme. Failure to submit required documentation for A Level / IB Diploma examinations will result in SJI International reporting this to the Ministry of Education. Students will be allowed one retake attempt to pass any examination. For those who take the outside examinations, students will still be required to study a second language of their choice at school, completing all usual assessment requirements.

- **Hindi**

Hindi is also a Government Approved Non-Tamil Indian Language which is taught as an integral part of the school curriculum. An additional fee is paid by parents for this. Students will take the IGCSE Hindi as a Second Language and IB Diploma Hindi B SL examinations as evidence of their adherence to the requirements of the MoE Mother Tongue Policy.

- **Mother Tongue-in-Lieu**

Students may apply for Mother Tongue-in-Lieu exemption which allows them to study French, German, Japanese, Thai, Burmese or Arabic. This is normally granted based on the length of study previously completed in that language or having a family / home connection to the language. Students are encouraged to study these subjects as part of the school's Home Language Programme. If taken outside, they will be required to complete the IGCSE / O Level and IB Language B SL / A Level examinations in the appropriate language and furnish the school with the evidence that these exams have been taken and passed. For those who take the outside examinations, students will still be required to study a second language of their choice at school, completing all usual assessment requirements.

- **A Level B Syllabus Examinations**

Very occasionally, students may struggle to pass their approved Mother Tongue language (Chinese, Tamil or Malay) in Grades 11 and 12. In this case the school will support the student to apply for the B syllabus A Level examination which will be taken outside school. The school will register students for this examination which will be taken in November of Grade 12. Preparation for this remains the parents' responsibility and they will be required to sign a letter to this effect. Students in this case will likely study another ab initio language in school to complete their Diploma.

Decisions about eligibility for this route will be made by the school. As a minimum we would expect to see:

- A history of poor achievement
- Significant interventions over time in collaboration between school / student / parents
- Full effort towards improvement by the student over time
- Full support of parents in supporting improvement
- Commitment to sustaining learning outside school environment

If the student's government approved mother tongue is taught within the school context (Chinese, Malay, Tamil or Hindi) students will not be allowed to take the outside local examinations as an alternative to the school's curriculum at any point except as detailed above.

- **Opportunities to Study Other Languages**

Students who wish to take a non-government approved Mother Tongue or a third language are strongly encouraged to study this language outside school as an activity, which will be part of the SMILES (Grade 7 and 8), Foundation CAS (Grades 9 and 10) or CAS (Grade 11 and 12) programmes. In addition, students are able to take an ab initio language as a Group 6 option at IB level (in addition to their chosen Groups 1 and 2 languages).

- **The Home Language Programme**

The aim of this programme is to help support the home language learning of students who are in our school community whose home language may be one we do not offer as part of our main curriculum. Students will be encouraged to study their home language to a high proficiency and will be able to study this language from Grades 7 to the IB Diploma (if the language is offered by the IBO), aiming to achieve a bilingual diploma (two group 1 subjects: Home Language and English).

In the first instance, this programme is for students studying on Dependent and Student passes. On a case-by-case basis, this programme may also be extended to Singaporean Citizens or Singapore Permanent residents who have been exempted from the MOE Language policy and who have a native language which is not English, Chinese, Malay or Tamil, or students who have MOE approval to study a Mother Tongue – In –Lieu. Please see the separate policy for details of this programme.

- **Documentation for students studying their Mother Tongue outside school**

For Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents who do not hold any form of exemption, their parents will be asked to re-confirm their commitment to maintaining the Mother Tongue with external up to A Level examination on a biannual basis (at the start of each phase of education: Grades 7&8, Grades 9&10, Grades 11&12).

Support of library and other media

Resources for all languages are available in the school library and some classroom libraries. The librarian, teaching staff, parents and students all contribute to building up resources, which are not restricted to the printed media. Resources in students' home language are purchased as required.

The school is piloting use of Education Perfect as a language acquisition tool which we believe to be highly effective at supporting language acquisition.

Home support

Parents are encouraged to give full support to their children through close communication with the school, encouraging their children to use widely the languages they are studying, particularly in respect of all the four skills. There should be communication among parents, students and teaching staff. A parent-teacher conference is held at least once every academic year. Teachers can be reached by e-mail or phone and extra meetings between parents and teachers can also be arranged.

