



Language Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Language Policy is to articulate our beliefs about the place of language in the education we offer and the responsibilities which arise from these beliefs. It is intended to guide us to ensure access to a full curriculum through English, promote our host country language, Italian, for all members of our community, and to develop mother-tongue acquisition and support in as wide a range of languages as is possible for a school of our size. The policy is designed to underpin our instructional practice.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to students, parents, faculty, staff, and the community of Marymount International School of Rome.

3. Definitions

Academic Language - The words, grammar and discourse strategies used to describe complex ideas, higher-order thinking processes, and abstract concepts.

Additive Bilingualism and Biculturalism - A situation where a second language is learned by an individual or a group without detracting from the development of the first language; the second language adds to, rather than replaces, the first language. This is the opposite of subtractive bilingualism.

Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) - Everyday straightforward communication skills that are helped by contextual supports.

Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) - The level of language required to understand academically demanding subject matter in a classroom. Such language is often abstract, without contextual supports such as gestures and the viewing of objects.

Mother-tongue-is used in the research literature in various ways, it may denote the language used first, the language identified with as a native speaker, the language known best, the language most used. When used in this document, it includes all of those meanings.

Interlingual Teaching and Learning - The inter prefix stands for international mindedness, the idea of the local and the global, of working together to create a better world. It also stands for all the home languages of the classroom. In the interlingual classroom, children not only learn their own mother-tongue but also about all the other classroom languages as well. Interlingual classrooms are places where children are allowed to use their languages as cognitive tools. The teaching and the learning affirm the student's identity and all students see the relevance of the curriculum to themselves.¹

Understanding by Design framework (UbD framework) - Offers a planning process and structure to guide curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Its two key ideas are contained in the title:

- 1) focus on teaching and assessing for understanding and learning transfer, and
- 2) design curriculum “backward” from those ends.

4. Policy Statement

Philosophy Statement

Marymount International School of Rome is part of the Global Network of RSHM Schools (nineteen schools in the following countries: Brazil, Colombia, France, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, United Kingdom, and the United States). Guided by the RSHM Goals and Criteria, Marymount believes in the dignity and worth of every person, therefore, all cultures and languages are valued. Marymount’s mission is at the foundation of our School’s Language Policy: *Language is involved in all learning and is essential to educational progress. In addition, to learning how to use language students must also learn about language and through language*². Aligning with the IB Learner Profile and our own Marymount Learner Profile, which both require students to be open-minded communicators, we encourage our students to understand and appreciate their own linguistic and cultural identities and to be open to the perspectives, values and traditions of others. We aspire to create a dynamic multilingual learning community in which the principal language of instruction is English, whilst at the same time promoting the development and maintenance of our students’ mother-tongues. We also encourage the acquisition of other languages, (Arabic, French, German, Italian, Latin, Mandarin, Spanish), and our students thrive within our linguistically and culturally rich environment.

5. Guiding Principles

Our Beliefs and Practices about Language Teaching and Learning

We believe that language is fundamental to learning, permeates the entire curriculum, and is crucial to all learning. We strive to maintain a high standard for the explicit teaching of languages in our teaching practices, curriculum documents, and professionalism as educators.

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We believe that every teacher is a language teacher and the teaching of language(s) is a shared responsibility across the School. We believe in additive bilingualism, biculturalism and in the interlingual teaching and learning approach. We strive to ensure that all members of staff are language aware, understand the length of time it takes to acquire CALP, the importance of teaching academic language, the importance of mother-tongue development, and the specific needs of students' learning in a language other than their mother-tongue. We add English onto the mother-tongue language(s) and culture(s) rather than replacing them. We create an enabling, multilingual environment that reflects our internationalism.

We believe that developing and maintaining students' mother-tongue(s) will enhance language learning and academic performance in all areas and is crucial for cognitive development, cultural identity, and self-esteem. We support students to express ideas confidently in more than one language, communicate in a variety of modes, work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others and use their mother-tongue, with guidance, when negotiating and constructing meaning during lessons.

We believe that parents are an integral part of our community of learners and are a valuable resource who can provide crucial support for language learning.

We strive to create a schoolwide culture of caring and respect for the linguistic and cultural identities of our students, their families, faculty, staff, and community and to share with parents the importance of the maintenance and development of students' mother-tongues.

6. Procedures/School Profile

English as the Principal Language of Instruction

English is the principal language of MMI. While multilingualism and mother-tongue are highly valued, English is our primary language of communication and instruction and we are committed to providing a high standard of communicating, teaching and learning in English.

- Language empowers students to understand, interpret and be able to respond to ideas, attitudes and feelings.
- English is the language of inclusion

English is also the social and inclusive language of the school as it is the only language that is understood, to a greater or lesser degree, by all members of the group. This includes language used, for example, in the cafeteria and the playground, on field trips and during after-school activities and sporting events.

Curriculum

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Marymount's standards-based curriculum is inclusive, inquiry-based, student-centered, developmental, and differentiated. We use a school wide unit planner in line with IB criteria. Units are designed using the Understanding By Design Framework. We endeavor to teach language within a meaningful context, use appropriate academic language which is taught explicitly and is visible in the curriculum. We interrelate the skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and media literacy across the curriculum. The planner dedicates space for explicit planning for language and learning with differentiation in each. It is intended that the teaching of language be made explicit in the content, skills and assessment sections of the planner.

International Baccalaureate

We offer Language A in English and Italian. Other languages are offered based on student need: Chinese, Dutch, Russian.

We offer Language B in English, Italian, French, German, and Spanish. Other languages are offered based on student need: Arabic, Italian *Ab.Int.*

On average just under half of our students graduate with a Bilingual IB Diploma (English/Italian, English/Chinese, English/Russian, English/Dutch)

The term 'mother tongue' may denote the language learned first, the language identified with as a 'native' speaker, the language best known or the language most used. Marymount recognises the importance of maintaining a student's mother tongue language, particularly if it is a language other than English. This is supported by the IB philosophy that states: "The IB has a policy of mother-tongue entitlement that promotes respect for the literary heritage of a student's home language and provides an opportunity for students to continue to develop oral and writing skills in their mother tongue while studying in a different language of instruction". (from the IB Language & Literature Guide for the support of mother tongue in the Diploma Programme, p. 8. 2013)

In Grades 11 and 12: it is through language A literature at SL that the IB addresses mother-tongue entitlement, allowing for the study of automatically available language plus special request and school supported self-taught languages (SSST), giving the greatest possible number of students the opportunity to follow a literature course in their mother tongue. This is only offered at Standard Level. The course comprises a number of prescribed reading texts, and assessment includes an individual oral commentary and an externally administered IB examination at the end of the course. Students and families are responsible for finding and financially compensating a tutor in the target language who can be of academic support over the two-year course. Marymount requires details of these tutors and will seek to validate their suitability. Students will meet regularly with the

School Supported Self-Taught Coordinator. The SSST Coordinator will also ensure that students are provided with the appropriate list of reading materials and will oversee the administration of all assessments.

The language ab initio course is designed for students with little or no prior experience of the language they wish to study. All final decisions on the appropriateness of the course for which students are entered are taken by coordinators in liaison with teachers, using their experience and professional judgment to guide them. The most important consideration is that the language ab initio course should be a challenging educational experience for the student. (Prior learning. Language ab initio guide, p.6, IBO 2011)

Language B SL is designed for students with some previous experience in the target language who already have the ability to communicate in the language in familiar contexts.

Language B HL is designed for students with previous experience in the target language who have the ability to communicate in that language in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes. (Guidance for studies in language and literature and language acquisition courses IBO Aug 2020)

English Language Learning (ELL) Support

The ELL program assists students whose first language is not English to become competent in English allowing them full access to the curriculum as well as to the social and academic life of the School.

The ELL Department, consisting of four teachers (two in lower and upper Elementary, one in Middle School, and one in High School), is committed to facilitating the acquisition of English of non-native speakers while respecting and promoting students' home languages and the acquisition of other languages. ELL support is provided through:

- The use of the WIDA MODEL of Assessment to track English language acquisition. Students are placed on monitor status when they have an overall score of 4 on a 1-6 continuum
- The use of sheltered instruction and pull-out classes for literacy support
- Collaborative planning of curricular content and instruction, across subject areas, highlighting specific language goals

Host Language Instruction

Italian mother-tongue students are provided with the opportunity to prepare for the Quinta Elementare, Idoneità, and the Terza Media exams. Italian as a Second Language is studied by all students in Grades 1-6 (by 2019 all students in Grades 1-8 will study Italian as an additional language)

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Professional Development

Marymount continues to create opportunities for expert led and embedded professional development in the areas of language development and teaching.

This Policy operates in conjunction with the Admissions Policy and the Inclusion Policy

2017-2018 Learning Support Handbook

Our ELL and LS Depts work collaboratively (but as separate departments) to ensure research-based and ethical decisions are made about students' academic programming.

References:

¹ "Learning in a Language other than the Mother-Tongue," (Geneva: IBO, 2008), p. 1.

² "Language and Learning in IB programmes," (Geneva: IBO, 2011), p.21.