



# Anton Bruckner International School

## Language Policy





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## Introduction

Our school language policy describes the beliefs and practices governing language learning at ABIS.

This policy was developed in collaboration and consultation with all teaching staff at our school.

It applies to the Primary and Middle Years Programmes and it serves as a basis for decision-making relating to language development and implementation at our school.

## IB Standards and Practices Pertaining to Language

- Standard A7 states: “The school places country importance on language learning, including mother tongue, host language, and other languages.”
- Standard A9 states: “The school supports access for students to the IB programme(s) and philosophy.”
- Standard A9a states: “The school strongly encourages participation for all students.”
- Standard B1 states: “The school develops and implements policies and procedures that support the programme(s).” d. “The school has developed and implements a language policy that is consistent with IB expectation (IBO, 2014).”
- Standard C1 states: “Collaborative planning and reflection recognizes that all teachers are responsible for language development of students.”
- Standard C3 states: “Teaching and learning addresses the diversity of student language needs, including those for students learning in a language(s) other than mother tongue.”  
“Teaching and learning demonstrates that all teachers are responsible for language development of students.”



## General Information

### Statement of Purpose

A language policy is an action statement. It is concerned less with where the students in a school are going, and more with how they are going to get there (Corson 199, qtd. in IBO 2008).

ABIS Language Policy is intended to articulate our school's linguistic and academic goals and outlines our plan of action to help students attain these goals.

We provide an international education for students coming from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Therefore, we also adhere to the IB philosophy on language, which aims at promoting multilingualism as a fundamental part of increasing intercultural understanding and international-mindedness.

Our language policy is a working document which has been developed by ABIS's teaching community.

It is a statement of agreement which we expect all our staff to commit to so that our school can fulfill its linguistic goals and academic goals.

### This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Academic Honesty Policy
- Admission Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Late Work Policy (MYP)
- Special Educational Needs Policy (MYP)

### Our Philosophy of Language

At ABIS, language is at the heart of all learning throughout the curriculum.

As an international community, we foster an inclusive environment where students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds can flourish and develop as life-long learners.

We value multilingualism as an important part of students' overall cognitive development.

We strongly promote the maintenance and development of our students' mother tongues because we believe it plays a crucial role in helping them learn other languages as well as preserving their linguistic heritage.

Language development at ABIS is the responsibility of all teachers and is delivered through a holistic approach which transcends disciplines.

Teachers work with students to develop age-appropriate competency in the core skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing.

By building a strong foundation in language at our school, we empower our students with the ability to think and to learn, to develop social skills and values, and to acquire knowledge. It allows us to connect to one another, seek solutions to problems, resolve differences, and cooperate towards building a better community.



Language makes it possible for us to inquire, laugh, share and truly maximize our learning experiences through life.

## Guiding Principles

**At ABIS our approach to language is guided by the following beliefs that:**

- language development forms the foundation for all learning and education all teachers should actively promote language learning in their subject-specific area
- well-developed language skills are essential to open, honest, and clear Communication
- a person's mother tongue is a direct link to that person's culture, heritage, and Identity
- parents have a central role to play in promoting the learning of their child's mother tongue and other languages in the home context
- multilingualism is a critical component of success in the globalised world that we live in
- language learners learn better when the target language is taught in a meaningful and authentic context
- language helps forge social relationships and cope with the practical expectations of life
- students should be given the opportunity to reflect on their own growth in the process of learning a new language
- students should receive differentiated lessons according to their language needs
- special accommodation should be made for students who are not proficient in the language of instruction
- instructional methods should include inquiry-based language lessons
- each student acquires language differently according to his/her learning style, ability, experiences and pace
- all staff, including administration, teachers and librarians, should attend language professional development sessions to keep up to date with new developments in language learning and teaching methods
- a wide range of assessment strategies should be employed when assessing students' progress in language learning



## **Additional Aspects**

- **Language Profile**

ABIS has a culturally and linguistically diverse school community, with a student population representing many nations and many languages.

Currently about 30% of our students speak English at home, about 30% speak German and the remaining 40% has a mother tongue other than English.

Our staff body is also made up of teachers from various countries, who speak a variety of languages.

The language of instruction and communication at ABIS is English.

Consequently, all classes with the exception of German Language and Literature and Language Acquisition classes (taught in German and Spanish), are conducted in English.

Students admitted to the school are taught the skills needed to become proficient readers, writers and communicators in the English language both for social interaction and academic success.

English is also the school's working language, and is used for governance, administration and management, collaborative planning, instruction, assessment, professional development and enrichment.

German is also used widely within the school for administrative purposes.

It is a requirement that all students study German (the language of the host country).

All native German speakers follow the German Language and Literature course whilst the non-native German speakers follow the German Language Acquisition course.

The standard bibliography and referencing format employed at our school is the Modern Language Association (MLA 8<sup>th</sup> edition).

Although English and German are the most common languages used in the school and generally outside the classroom, we also encourage the use of other languages in appropriate circumstances.

It is therefore not uncommon to hear teachers and students reverting to mother-tongue in subjects, or chatting informally together in a language other than English.

- **Admission Policy**

At ABIS we welcome students from diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Students with few English language skills are accepted and supported through our ESL programme.

Depending on their level of English proficiency, applicants enrolling in may be asked to take an English Language Proficiency Test in all the four domains: listening, speaking, writing and reading.

The main purpose of the test is to determine their levels of proficiency in the language and this in turn will help the school determine the type and degree of



support students will require if they fall within the English Language Learners category.

For admissions into MYP Year 3 and onwards, students should demonstrate that they are able to cope with the level of academic English required.

They should also possess basic skills and knowledge in other core subject areas like Math and the Sciences.

Please read our detailed [Admission Policy](#) for more information.

## **Library**

At ABIS we believe that the school library has an important role to play in the promotion of language learning.

It is the aim of the school librarian to provide diverse resources and opportunities to foster understanding and appreciation of life-long language learning.

The school librarian is continually upgrading our library in order to ensure that it responds to the linguistic needs of our multilingual student community.

Materials are carefully chosen to support the curriculum.

The school's resources offer access to different cultures, perspectives and languages.

There is a strong emphasis on developing the mother tongue collection to reflect the linguistic diversity of our student population.

The librarian works in close collaboration with teachers to support students' language and literacy development in English, language acquisition courses as well as their mother tongue.

The librarian also works with the teachers to implement the school ATL skills scope and sequence and to plan and deliver academic honesty workshops for all students.

Classes can access the library at all times with teacher permission.

Children are encouraged to borrow books and spend time enjoying the resources.

## **Professional Development**

ABIS provides on-going professional development for all teaching staff.

On-going professional development addresses the concept of international mindedness and the role languages have in the curriculum.

Additionally, this training provides rich opportunities for staff to share best practices and to develop strategies to ensure that the curriculum is accessible to all students.

## **Language Implementation in the PYP at ABIS**

### **Language Teaching and Learning**

At ABIS, the teaching of language builds upon the previous experience, needs and interests of the learners. Teaching and learning in PYP 1 to PYP 5 is based on the Language Scope and Sequence documents.

**Within the framework of the IB, students are provided with the opportunities to:**



- reflect on their learning and self-assess
- use language within meaningful contexts and across curricula
- participate in school wide reading initiatives and poetry slams
- present their opinions, work and the work of others
- use music and the arts to increase vocabulary and develop language
- reflect on language through comparisons with foreign languages

### **Teaching staff ensure optimal teaching and learning through:**

- Presenting language through meaningful authentic contexts
- Integrating language and other subject areas
- Assisting students in discovering and practicing language structures
- Encouraging students to reflect on language and develop language awareness (including but not limited to form and audience)
- Recognizing and respecting the different ways in which students express themselves
- Fostering mother tongue development
- Providing students with a physical environment, which enriches their language development
- Supporting the development of positive attitudes toward improving communication skills and provide a wide range of opportunities to do so
- Using a wide range of teaching and assessment strategies within a balanced language program that includes listening, viewing, speaking, reading, and writing
- Providing challenges to students which allow opportunities for them to reach their full potential
- Acknowledging differences in developmental stages, learning styles, as well as, previous language experiences

### **To facilitate language instruction, teaching staff:**

- Implement unit plans and weekly plans, based on the curricula



- Serve as facilitators
- Run class libraries
- Implement transdisciplinary units of study
- Engage students in cooperative discussions
- Model effective reading, speaking, writing and listening skills
- Provide opportunities to present, research and read aloud
- Express feelings and opinions and encourage others to do the same
- Express needs, feeling, ideas, and opinions using the acquisition of learning a foreign language
- Encourage parental involvement

## **Mother Tongue Support**

**We recognize the importance of mother tongue language acquisition, and provide support for students in the following ways:**

- Library resources are available in various languages
- Supporting parents in organizing mother tongue tutoring outside normal school hours, and providing facilities for this purpose
- Displaying a variety of languages throughout the school building

## **Language Acquisition**

- **German**
  - ABIS provides 5 hours per week of German second language or German mother tongue instruction to all students from PYP 1 to PYP 5. The school recognizes that learning a second language is a developmental process that occurs over time. The aim is that all students acquire an acceptable standard of proficiency in the skills of listening, viewing, speaking, reading, and writing German. Cultural awareness and understanding play a fundamental role within lessons.
- **English**
  - Learners with little or no ability in English are identified by the admissions officer and/or classroom teachers and individually assessed by the ESL teacher to ascertain the amount and nature of the support required.



Students receive individualized or small group English and academic support during class time. Additionally, students receive in-class support, one-to-one teacher support and are presented with the possibility of after-school ESL clubs

## **Parental Involvement**

Parents are recognized as an integral part of our learning community and, as such, are involved in listening to readers and providing expert knowledge as guest speakers.

Our Parent Teacher Organization has also provided help in the provision of mother tongue language support and advice.

ABIS provides regular parental workshops.

## **Language Implementation in the MYP at ABIS**

### **Language and Literature**

In the MYP, it is a requirement that all students study at least two languages, one from the language and literature course and one from the language acquisition course.

At ABIS, we offer English and German as Language and Literature.

These courses build on the four strands of language learning (listening and speaking, reading, writing and viewing and presenting) that students have learned in the PYP. The subject is offered as an integrated course which fosters creative and critical thinking.

Each unit consists of a statement of inquiry, global context and key and related concepts.

Grammar is taught in context, and students are exposed to a wide range of literature from different genres, periods, and cultures. World literature is an important component in each year of the programme.

By exploring literature from other cultures, we are encouraging our students to develop open mindedness as they learn to appreciate literary works not only from authors from their own corners of the world, but also from other parts of the world.

Students are encouraged to express both analytical and personal responses and engage in a number of reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing activities to encourage the development of linguistic and literacy skills.

Students receive four 50-minute periods of Language and Literature instruction per week.

They are assessed using the IB MYP prescribed assessment criteria for the subject.

### **Language Acquisition**



At ABIS we are very much aware of the fact that our students are living in an increasingly interconnected world in which knowing how to communicate in multiple languages can lead to the opening of many doors.

We therefore make it a priority to ensure that every student develops proficiency in at least two languages.

Research has shown that learning other languages brings numerous benefits such as building multitasking skills, improving decision-making skills and boosting brain development.

According to Professor Dorothy Leonard, people who speak two or more languages can “see the world from two or more perspectives.”

They have “the cognitive diversity needed to formulate innovative solutions to complex problems.”(Dan Frost 2010).

Learning another language can also help to bridge cultural connections and may give someone an economic edge.

By giving our students the opportunity to learn other languages, we are giving them the chance to develop these important attributes.

Our language acquisition programme contributes to the multicultural identity of our international community.

In the MYP, students have the opportunity to study Spanish and German as second languages.

For both languages students are taught within six phases depending on their competencies.

They receive three 50-minute periods of Spanish and German per week and they are assessed according to the Language Acquisition Assessment Criteria prescribed by the IB.

Depending on how students have performed in both languages during the year, they may be recommended to move to a higher phase or a lower one.

In German Language Acquisition, students who have reached phase 4 may be considered for transfer to German Language and Literature.

The decisions to move students from one group to the other will be done in consultation with all the parties concerned.

## **Mother Tongue Support**

The term mother tongue usually refers to one’s native language (Merriam-Webster 2015).

It is essential for students to maintain their mother tongue to ensure continuous cognitive development and to support their learning across the curriculum.

In addition to learning English, ABIS is committed to helping students develop appropriate language skills to become proficient communicators in their mother tongue.

It is important for them to be able to read with fluency and express themselves effectively, both orally and in writing.

Maintaining and developing their mother tongue also facilitates students’ transition back into the school and society of their home country, should they return there.

At ABIS all students are required to study German, the language of the host country.

## **Language Support in the MYP**



## English as a Second Language (ESL) Programme

Our ESL programme is designed to provide specialised support to English Language Learners (ELL).

These are students who have little or no proficiency in English and because of this, their ability to fully participate in both the academic and social aspects of school life are severely hampered.

These students have a wealth of knowledge in their mother tongue but because they often lack the vocabulary and concept of the new language they will have problems comprehending the content.

As Cameron rightly put it “if they are not understanding, they cannot be learning” (Cameron 2000, qtd. in Thomson 2012).

In order to identify and diagnose this problem early, all new students who are admitted into our Middle Years Programme (from MYP 1 to MYP 3) are required to take an English language proficiency test in the four core skills: speaking, writing, reading and listening.

The test also helps to determine the amount and type of support that students will need.

Once students have been assessed they are placed in their appropriate level.

Those who require ESL support receive a combination of intensive small group support with a specialist ESL teacher in pull-out classes and some in-class support as needed.

All ESL classes are delivered during regular class time and integrated into the curriculum. (covered on page 7 – Admissions policy)

The ESL teacher regularly monitors students’ progress and this is communicated to other teachers and parents.

An ESL student will exit the programme when both the ESL and other subject teachers are satisfied that the student has attained sufficient mastery of the language that would enable him/her to follow mainstream classes and achieve results that match the potential of that particular student.

The parents of ESL students will also be notified when their child exits the ESL Programme.

The student’s progress in the mainstream classroom is consistently monitored and further ESL support is available as required.

In the Middle School, the main goal is to equip students with the linguistic skills necessary to enable them to integrate fully into mainstream classes.

ESL teachers focus on building student confidence and developing their communicative competence.

## MYP Student Learning Support Plan (MYP SLSP)

The MYP Student Learning Support Plan is intended for students with special educational needs and those who are really struggling in a particular area(s) of the curriculum and who are in need of individualized and specialized support.

The plan addresses specific learning areas of a particular subject, which might be skills, knowledge or conceptual understanding that a student is having problems mastering.



On the Student Learning Support Plan, teachers will comment on the student's specific weaknesses in the subject area or other areas of need.

Then, along with the support teacher, they outline the specific intervention strategies to be implemented over a period of time in order to address the needs of that particular student.

Students will also set their own S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and relevant, and time-bound) goals on the plan and create an action plan outlining how they intend to achieve their goals.

These plans will be discussed with students' parents in order to raise their awareness, encourage their involvement and get their input on how best to help their child reach the set goals (see Appendix II).

## **Support Within Other Areas of the Curriculum**

At ABIS language development is seen as a shared responsibility, and therefore all teachers are expected to play an active role in promoting language learning in their respective subject areas.

Subject teachers are expected to teach the language structures and conventions needed in their subject.

Research evidence has shown that adapting teaching approaches to accommodate children without the same level of language ability as native children has a beneficial effect (European Commission 2015).

It is therefore required that teachers differentiate their instructions in order to meet the learning needs of students experiencing difficulties with the language of instruction.

Within the classrooms, we encourage all teachers to employ strategies such as technology based lessons, menus, tiered instruction, differentiated texts or simplifying the language used in tests and other tasks for struggling students.

## **Technology**

ABIS embraces technology as an integral part of language teaching, which enhances the learning experience.

Technology enables students to investigate, create, communicate, collaborate, organize, and be responsible for their own learning.

The interactive nature of new technologies can transcend linguistic, cultural and geographic boundaries.

The audio and visual components of these tools can help further reinforce an understanding of languages and texts.

Technology motivates and empowers language learners.

It provides them with rich, authentic and relevant contexts for language development at all levels of instruction.

Whenever possible we will employ new technologies to help our students make connections with their counterparts from other countries.

We will encourage all students to bring their own computers and use technology in their mother tongue whenever appropriate and this will be done in accordance with the school's Acceptable Use Policy.



For some mother tongues, we will encourage students to explore self-study programmes available for free on the internet. Students who choose this option will follow the online course under the supervision of an adult.

## **Student-Exchange Programmes**

At ABIS we seek to create an environment where all students can explore and learn other languages in a meaningful and authentic context. Our student-exchange programmes will be designed to supplement the language learning that is happening in the classroom. Through this programme teachers and students will get to travel to countries where the targeted language is spoken, giving them first-hand experiences which can provide critical incentives to learn. This kind of initiative also creates opportunities for students to make friends in other countries which in turn can help to improve their language skills.

## **Parental Involvement in Language Learning**

Parents have the power to help their children develop proficiency in their mother tongue which in turn will help to preserve the linguistic heritage of their community. We also believe that the learning process continues at home and that students benefit by writing and reading in their mother tongue. ABIS strongly encourages families to use the mother tongue extensively in their homes, the community, and other outside school experiences. Parents can help their children develop mother tongue competences by providing opportunities for conversations that entail rich language use in the mother tongue. This will not only support maintaining the mother tongue, but enhance English language learning in addition to other languages they may choose to learn later. Learning their mother tongue also has the added benefit of enhancing students' confidence, their cultural awareness and pride in their culture. Many students who attend our school are not native English speakers, or come from backgrounds of mixed cultures and languages. These children are faced with the challenges of learning multiple home languages in addition to other languages that they have to learn at school. At ABIS we encourage such families to implement a Family Language Plan (See Appendix I). Our teachers work closely with the parents to provide materials or resources that will benefit the student's learning and acquisition of languages. Library resources are available on request. We also encourage parents to support their child by taking an active interest in their daily homework assignments.

## **Assessment Policy for Language**



In the MYP the assessment of languages is criterion-related and we adhere to the School Assessment Policy and the assessment guidelines and requirements prescribed by the IB (see ABIS Assessment Policy).

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## Appendix 1

## An Example of a Family Language Plan

### Family Language Plan Strategies

	Parent 1 (Mom)	Parent 2 (Dad)	The School (IBS)	The Plan	Example
<b>Strategy 1</b>	Language A	Language A	Language B	Both of the parents speak their native language to the child, who is fully exposed to Language B (English in the case of ISB), when outside of the home, particularly at school. This becomes the child's second language	Mom and dad are both native Thai speakers. Thai is always spoken at home, and English language education is received from the school
<b>Strategy 2</b>	Language A	Language B	Language A or B	The parents each speak their native language to the child, but one of the native languages is supported in school.	Mom is Chinese and dad is American. Mom speaks only mandarin to the child. Dad only speaks English to the child. The child gets further English through the school
<b>Strategy 3</b>	Language A Language B	Language A	Language C	One of the parents always addresses the child in his/her second language. The other parent uses the native language. (This is most successful if the parent has 2 native languages. If the parent speaking his/her second language does not have it as a native language, he/she must have intensively studied and mastered the language.	Mom is German, but has native -like fluency in French (Meaning that intensive study occurred for 5 - 10 years, or perhaps French is an additional native language). Mom speaks her second language, French, to the child. Dad is also German, but only speaks German to the child. The child receives English instruction from school.
<b>Strategy 4</b>	Language A	Language B	Language C	Each of the parents always speaks their native language to the child. The child gets a third language through the school.	Mom's native language is Spanish. Dad's native language is Hebrew. Mom always speaks Spanish to the child, and dad always speaks Hebrew to the child. The child obtains a third language, English, from the school