

Language and EAL Policy

Abstract

This document is intended to articulate Southbank International School's philosophy of language teaching and learning. This policy should be read in conjunction with other key policies, procedures and handbooks.

Language and Learning Philosophy

At Southbank International School, language is at the heart of all learning. As an international community, we foster an inclusive environment for students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. We value multilingualism as an important part of students' overall cognitive development. Language teaching at Southbank 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 and listening.

Language of Instruction (English)

English is the primary language of instruction at Southbank.

Our curriculum is designed to nurture communication and literacy skills that encourage independent thought, insightful interpretations and the lifelong love of language. The interactive elements of language – speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing, and presenting – are taught within a concept-based, trans-disciplinary and interdisciplinary approach to learning. Teaching and learning are structured to encourage risk-taking, inspire intellectual curiosity and develop academic and cognitive skills.

Students explore the history and culture of the United Kingdom and other English-speaking countries through a variety of literary and linguistic activities. Using London as a classroom enables students to participate in experiential learning. We recognise English as an international language and the fact that there are many forms of English spoken in the international community.

Mother Tongue

The term *mother tongue* 'denote[s] the language learned first; the language identified with as a 'native' speaker; the language known best; the language used most' (*Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes*, 2008).

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, Southbank 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. Students are encouraged to explore the history, culture and literature of their own country. Our aim is that students should become confident in their own language, value their heritage and increase their intercultural awareness.

In the PYP, Spanish mother tongue lessons are taught to fluent Spanish speakers. We encourage mother tongue development in other languages by facilitating private lessons after school where possible. Students are encouraged to make connections between their mother tongue and other languages to promote their cognitive development and further their language acquisition.

French and Spanish mother tongue lessons are taught to French and Spanish fluent speakers within the MYP curriculum. A variety of other mother tongue languages are also offered as structured academic courses, which usually take place after school or, in certain cases, during the school day. Teachers develop students' linguistic and literary skills through the study of a variety of text types. This provides continuity across all IB programmes. In the IB Diploma Programme, the school offers a wide variety of Language A (mother tongue) courses at Higher and Standard Levels, which allows students to obtain a bilingual Diploma.

How Language is implemented in the PYP

Our Primary Years Programme (PYP) promotes inquiry-based language learning and recognises the trans-disciplinary nature of language learning. In the PYP students develop their understanding of language through units of inquiry and stand-alone engagements.

The language and literacy teaching programme develops listening, speaking, reading, writing and media literacy skills. Learning focuses on use of texts, conventions, contextual understanding, processes and strategies.

Opportunities for development of speaking, listening and presenting skills are integrated on a daily basis in various situations such as classroom discussions, group work and presentations to the class and school community.

Students build their basic reading strategies of decoding and comprehending texts. They further develop their understanding of texts and critical thinking skills through literature discussion reading groups, focusing on inference, evaluation and predication.

They also become familiar with a range of different writing purposes and text types, integrated within the units of inquiry. Children learn spelling patterns, high-frequency words and words which are meaningful to them. This builds their knowledge and extends their understanding of vocabulary and spelling conventions.

How Language and Literature is implemented in the MYP

Within the Middle Years Programme (MYP), Language and Literature is an integrated course which fosters creative and critical thinking. Each unit contains 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 of different genres, periods and places. World literature is a feature in each year of the programme. Students are encouraged to express both analytical and personal responses and engage in a number of reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities to encourage the development of linguistic and literacy skills.

How Language A is implemented in the DP

Two Language A (studies in language and literature) courses are offered in the Diploma Programme (DP) at Southbank. The Literature course encourages students to appreciate

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the aesthetic qualities of literature through the study of a wide range of literary texts. The Language and Literature course 'aims to develop in students skills in textual analysis and understanding the texts, both literary and non-literary, can be seen as autonomous yet simultaneously related to culturally determined reading practices' (*Language A: language and literature subject outline*, 2015). Both courses feature works in translation and place emphasis on written and oral communication. In all Diploma courses, language is implemented through the critical analysis of diverse literary and non-literary texts. Theory of Knowledge, at the core of the Diploma Programme, complements the study of Language A.

New Language Acquisition

Communication skills are at the core of Southbank's philosophy of education. Language learning is a fundamental tool and an integral part of this philosophy. Acquiring a new language should enable students to communicate effectively and open their minds to the culture of the target language.

Language development, as a process of constructing meaning, should be an enjoyable experience that awakens curiosity and creativity. Teachers create an environment which encourages students to establish trans-disciplinary/interdisciplinary links across the curriculum.

Our language acquisition programme contributes to the multicultural identity of our international community. Learning a new language broadens one's social and cultural horizons and helps students to develop a better understanding of social and ethical values in a changing world.

Students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 undertake the study of a second language, which we believe leads to a lifelong interest and provides a platform for learning other new languages. There is a balance of listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and presenting with a focus on a communicative approach.

In the PYP, Spanish instruction is integrated within units of inquiry and taught through stand-alone sessions. In the MYP, students have the opportunity to continue to study Spanish or to learn French. In the DP, there is provision for students to begin a new language or to continue with the language they have been studying in the MYP.

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

The EAL Department welcomes students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The programme is designed to enable English language learners to access our curriculum and engage in all social and enrichment activities at the school. EAL teachers work closely with classroom teachers to support, advise and assess EAL student work in the classroom. Following consultation between EAL and mainstream teachers, EAL students are exited from the programme when their language skills reflect their cognitive ability.

English language lessons are taught outside of the mainstream classroom in the context of the PYP units of inquiry. These individual or small group sessions aim to build linguistic proficiency, confidence and the ability to make connections with other language learning, especially the mother tongue. EAL teachers also support students in their homerooms.

In the middle school, the main goal is to equip our students with the linguistic skills necessary to integrate fully into mainstream classes. EAL teachers focus on building student confidence and developing their communicative competence.

English B is a 2-year Diploma-level course, offered at Higher Level, for students whose mother tongue is not English.

Students may have the opportunity to take the Cambridge First Examination and the Cambridge Certificate of Advanced English (CAE).

Learning Support

Southbank offers Learning Support in accordance with the philosophy of the International Baccalaureate, that: 'All students should be allowed to demonstrate their academic ability.'

Learning Support provision seeks flexible solutions for a wide variety of needs including learning differences and speech, behavioural, mental and emotional health, and academic transition issues. We aim to meet the diverse language learning needs of children through differentiation and a range of support strategies in the classroom, working in collaboration with EAL and class teachers. Extra support is regularly provided on a case-by-case basis. From the beginning of the process, parents are informed that their involvement is essential.

Across all programmes, Southbank employs a variety of intervention methods that are deemed appropriate after assessment by internal and/or external sources. We may refer children to more specialised assessment and teaching if we cannot best meet their needs. The Learning Support teacher and classroom teachers follow through suggestions from outside agencies on an individual basis, making reasonable adjustments wherever possible. Throughout all programmes, appropriate exam accommodations are provided, with supporting documentation from certified assessors or medical personnel.

Library

At Southbank we believe the libraries are the heart of the three IB programmes. It is the aim of the PYP, MYP and DP librarians to provide resources and opportunities to foster understanding and appreciation of life-long language learning.

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 our international student population.

The librarians collaborate with teachers to support students' language and literacy development in English as well as their mother tongue.

Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Southbank embraces ICT as an integral part of language teaching, which enhances the learning experience. In line with IB policy, ICT enables students to 'investigate, create, communicate, collaborate, organize, and be responsible for their own learning.'

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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 language and text. Technology motivates and empowers language learners. It provides them with rich, authentic and relevant contexts for language development at all levels of instruction.

Across all campuses, Southbank promotes opportunities for students to use computer systems operating in their mother tongue, in accordance with the school's Acceptable Use Policy.

Assessment

Language assessment is continuous and functions within the guidelines of all levels of the International Baccalaureate Programmes. Please refer to whole school assessment as well as campus-specific policies.

Students are guided by the values of the IB Learner Profile. They have a responsibility to demonstrate honesty and integrity in their work and they are taught to present their knowledge in a principled way, as stated in the school's Academic Honesty Policy.

Censorship

Southbank recognises and seeks to understand our community's cultural, religious, moral, and personal ethics, values and viewpoints. Should any educational material or subject be of concern to any member of the Southbank community, we encourage that member to address his/her concern in writing to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will follow the regulations (July 2015) of Keeping Children Safe in Education in relation to mandatory reporting. There is a procedure in place to ensure that the person writing should receive a considered response in a timely manner.

Admissions

The Admissions Office welcomes students from around the world. Our student body is made up of around seventy nationalities. Understanding each student's linguistic and educational background is of primary importance. The school facilitates the teaching of approximately twenty languages. To ensure that students benefit fully from the broad curriculum offered by the school, prospective students for whom English is not their mother tongue, are required to complete an approved online English test.

Professional Development

Southbank has identified three key areas for professional development: developing international mindedness and cultural awareness in line with the IB Learner Profile, developing strategies for ensuring accessibility of the curriculum for students learning in an additional language, and ensuring IB training for all teachers.

New staff training highlights the importance of mother tongue and additional language acquisition. The training supports the philosophy that all teachers are language teachers. Ongoing development for all staff will include in-house meetings focusing on international mindedness and the role of languages in the curriculum.

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Professional development provides opportunities for staff to share best practice and to develop strategies to ensure the curriculum is accessible to all students. Staff new to the IB will receive training as appropriate. They will be introduced to programme-specific tools and strategies, including an introduction to IB language-related documentation.