

## **Language Policy**

*November 2009 –*

### **Introduction**

- This language policy outlines the SGBIS's linguistic and academic goals and defines how our students will attain them.
- The language policy, as well as serving the needs of an international school with second language learners, focuses on the processes of language learning and teaching.
- The policy is a statement of agreement – one to which the staff and community are asked to give their commitment so that our school can achieve its goals.
- The language policy forms the basis of our school learning policy since knowledge is largely assimilated through language.
- The language policy is used by decision-makers in the school to ensure that the programmes provided are well organised, well resourced, rigorous and continuous.
- The language policy is intended to provide guidelines. SGBIS is committed to assessing the needs of the individual student and to providing the best solution for those individual needs.

### **Our objectives**

- At SGBIS, we strive to foster in students the ability to think and express themselves with precision, clarity, confidence and imagination in at least two languages. Although we are not a bilingual school we support the IB philosophy that encourages our students to be effective communicators in their L1 and another language.
- We understand the particular problems of those students being educated in a language other than their mother tongue.
- We provide an appropriate language and learning programme in order to allow all pupils to benefit from our curriculum.

### **Where possible we would like to:**

- integrate expression of cultural and linguistic heritage in all programmes and facilitate cultural exchange through the curriculum and special events.
- support students' Mother Tongue. We recognise the importance of the maintenance of the mother tongue by students at all levels.

### **Language aims**

The school aims for the vast majority of students to become at least functionally literate in a minimum of two languages. The competence of most students is expected to extend well beyond a basic level. For most students these languages will either be:

- Either English or Italian (as a first language), or Chinese or Dutch (available outside school)
- Another first language, English as a second language, French, Italian or Spanish
- Encourage and support the maintenance of mother tongues other than English (we do not have a Mother Tongue programme in school other than Italian A classes)

### **Language of Instruction**

English is the language of instruction across the curriculum (except in lessons of languages other than English) and the common language of communication in the school (reports, correspondence, website). Reports for Italian first language classes are completed in Italian.

However, it is recognized that some students may want and need to use their other languages to clarify and consolidate meaning. While we actively encourage the use of English we do not prohibit the use of other languages; to do so can impede students' cognitive development and linguistic growth.

### ***Attitudes to Mother Tongue Programmes at SGBIS***

The school acknowledges the vital importance of the maintenance of mother tongue development as a foundation for virtually all other learning.

Maintaining the mother tongue has the following benefits:

- facilitating the learning of the second language
- ensuring continuous cognitive development (in parallel with reaching competence in the second language) and additive bilingualism
- increasing intercultural awareness and understanding
- enabling the students to remain in touch with, and maintain esteem for the language, literature and culture of their home country
- facilitating readjustment to life in the home community and education system should they return to their home country

In the senior school at KS3, English A and Italian A are offered as mother tongue courses. At KS4 these same options open. In the sixth form, mother tongue (language A1) language courses are either provided by the school or can be arranged on a self-taught basis.

Where the school cannot provide direct instruction in a language, it will seek to support students and their families in mother-tongue maintenance by such mechanisms as:

- Delivering information to parents. Attending the school's information sessions on the development of EAL and mother tongue (held once a year) is highly recommended.
- recognising learning in community language centres (such as Saturday schools, the Chinese, Italian and Japanese communities)
- developing library resources in a range of languages used by students (through donations)
- providing guidance for provision of specialists in mother tongue instruction (as part of self-taught courses)
- providing accommodation for mother tongue classes/clubs where necessary.

At IB Diploma level, the student enrolled for a "self-taught" Language A1 must be able to work independently as, usually, most of the course is unsupervised. It is recommended that student and tutor meet, on average, for two hours every two weeks with work being set for the student to complete independently. The recommended contact time between tutor and student assumes that the student's recording skills and awareness of the cultural background of the language concerned are as good as those of his/her educational contemporaries in the country of origin.

The IB diploma awarded will be "bilingual" as it will feature a qualification in a Language A1 other than English, the school's language of tuition.

-Subject teachers should engage the students in reflections involving the use of their mother tongue and home culture across the curriculum.

### ***Departmental Organisation***

The Head of English is responsible for the language A1 students, A2 courses and course organization.

The Head of EAL is responsible for EAL students and IB language B students and their respective courses. However, as the EAL course in KS3 largely shadows the first language courses, there is significant cross-over in resources and scheduling of tasks.

The Head of languages is in charge of languages taught throughout the senior school even though there are i/c teachers for each language area (Spanish, Italian, French, Latin). Further to that, the Italian department has recently divided the post of Head of Italian into Head of A and Head of B. This shadows the English Department model.

## ***Inclusivity***

As English is the common language of communication in the school, speakers of other languages are encouraged to understand that using other languages may have the unintentional effect of excluding others from their discourse: students and staff alike are required to exercise great sensitivity in this matter. Specifically, unless teachers expressly give permission for students to explain concepts to each other in an alternative language, the greater part of classroom conversations (except, of course, in language lessons) should be in English.

However, it is also recognised that there is significant value for students to speak in other languages/mother tongue as this can be beneficial to their learning and strengthen their general cognitive development BUT this needs to be monitored and - in normal circumstances - feedback or group talk should be in English (unless, again, it a language class)

## ***English Language Courses***

The aims of a second language programme are to enable the students to access the curriculum of the school, while at the same time developing broad communication and interaction skills.

The students will be able to:

- Use the language confidently and effectively as a means of communication within the social, cultural and academic life of the school, and in the wider community
- Develop the specific communicative skills required by each subject in the curriculum, including the development of the language of critical thinking and problem solving, and the use of creative language as a vehicle for self-expression
- Develop a critical approach to study, including strategies for dealing with unfamiliar texts and language
- Develop an understanding of the nature of language and the process of language learning
- Develop an understanding of the cultural patterns that affect the thinking, feeling and acting of societies in which English is spoken.

## ***Senior School Years 7 -9 English A and EAL***

### ***Intensive Beginners Course***

Absolute beginners are normally only allowed in Year 7. They follow an intensive English course and these pupils are expected to become intermediate learners within one school year. Again, however, it should be acknowledged that genuine proficiency for academic skills takes between 5 and 7 years to achieve. This can vary from student to student.

Pupils who need extra English lessons to support learning in other subjects are given English support lessons until teachers feel they are able to cope in all subjects. These students are removed from the humanities lessons and gradually reinstated as and when their proficiency develops.

Subject teachers are also responsible for supporting the pupils' linguistic needs across the curriculum and liaising with the EAL department in order to provide specific resources and differentiated materials.

The EAL course is intended for pupils who have been schooled in English for an extended period of time, but whose mother tongue is not English.

Over the course of the school year, lower school pupils who show genuine ability to cope with the English A course may be moved from EAL to English first language after a testing and assessment procedure has taken place. The decision is taken by the Head of EAL in consultation with the Head of English. Such a move cannot normally take place once the IGCSE and IB courses have started (i.e. no relocation after the beginning of Year 10 and Year 12).

## **English A**

The English A1 IB course is intended for pupils whose mother tongue is English. At IB level, the students who can demonstrate near-native proficiency in English are placed in the English A2 group if there are enough students to sustain the course (usually a minimum of 5).

All students enrolling as candidates for the IB course are required to study a Language A1. In the terminology of the IB, a Language A1 is the student's "best" language; it will usually be the language in which the student pursues his/her course of studies: the language in which all teaching is given in the school; the language normally used for written and oral work.

## **Course choices**

In the senior school the terminology for classes is as follows:

**EAL** – English as a additional language (language B in IB terminology)

First language (language A or A1 in IB terminology)

**A2** – near native level (language A2 in IB terminology)

While at SGBIS, we do not offer the IB programme prior to IB DP level the terminology of A and B is sometimes used to differentiate between first and EAL classes)

Attention should be paid to the actual objectives and content of the relevant programmes of instruction offered by the school, and the assessment of those objectives by using appropriate criteria.

At IB level the terminology of Language A (A1, A2 Standard and Higher) and B (B Standard and Higher) is rigidly adopted.

The assessment criteria used by language teachers should be shared with the pupils and their parents.

All programmes are designed to give students the maximum effective range of options for the IB diploma, taking starting levels into account. The school seeks to maintain a strict expectation that students will be engaged in language programmes that involve real challenge and intellectual development. This implies that students must not take subjects below their true learning level. For example, a student should not take a language B course if s/he is not genuinely a second language learner in that subject. This is an issue for many of our students.

EAL students should not be treated as students with learning problems. There needs to be a clear differentiation between EAL students and students with special learning needs (SEN).

## **Italian as the Language of the Host Country**

The school has an obligation, which it willingly embraces, to teach Italian Language to all students that choose it.

- Teaching Italian provides the pupils with knowledge and understanding of Italian language and traditions, in order to increase their awareness of the culture of the host country and to encourage enthusiastic, self-confident participation within the Italian community.
- The course focuses on :
- using the language as a means of communication within the wider community

- developing the use of creative language
- developing an understanding of the nature of language and the process of language learning

### ***French, Latin and Spanish as foreign languages***

- French; Spanish and Latin are offered as foreign languages from year 7 onwards.
- Spanish as a foreign language is offered from Year 10 onwards.
- The Spanish and French B courses provide the children with knowledge and understanding of the language and culture of the countries where the languages studied are spoken.
- The courses focus on:  
using the language as a means of communication  
developing the use of creative language  
developing an understanding of the nature of language and the process of language learning  
developing an understanding of the cultural patterns that affect the thinking, feeling and acting of societies in which the languages are spoken.

### ***Group Size***

- For English intensive beginners' courses, the aim should be for a maximum of 6 pupils.
- For EAL lessons, groups should not exceed 12 pupils.
- Languages department??
- For first language English classes, groups should not exceed 20 pupils.
- Should numbers be higher than the above, the Head of school will be consulted about forming two classes from the class affected.
- There should be some limit at IB for teaching Higher and Standard levels in the same class.
- At IB level, if the number of students in the A1 class exceeds 4, the course becomes a taught option.

### ***Language options in Senior School Years 7, 8, 9***

<b>English (compulsory)</b>	<b>Italian (compulsory)</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Language</b>
English A	Italian A	French
English B (EAL)	Italian B	Spanish
English Intensive Beginners (only for Year 7)		Latin

### ***Language options in Senior School Years 10 and 11 (IGCSE course)***

<b>1<sup>st</sup> language</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> language</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Language</b>
English Language, (+ English Literature course)	English as a Second Language, extended level	French as a Foreign Language
		Spanish as a Foreign Language
Italian as a First Language	Italian as a Second Language	German as a Foreign Language
		Latin

**IB Years 12 and 13**

Language A1 (first language)	Language A2/B (second language)	
	Language A2	Language B
English A1, Higher and Standard level	English A2, HL and SL	English B, Higher and Standard level
Italian A1, Higher and Standard level		Italian B, Higher and Standard level
		Italian Ab initio (for beginners)
Spanish A1, Higher and Standard level		French B, Higher and Standard level
		Spanish B, Higher and standard level
French A1, Higher and Standard level		Portuguese B (this academic year 2008-9)
Chinese A1 taught outside school		
Self-taught mother tongue, only offered at Standard level - Dutch		

## Glossary of terms:

<b>Additive Model/Common Underlying Proficiency</b>	Theory that both acquisition of first and second languages can contribute to underlying language proficiency. Experiences with both languages, according to Cummins, promote the development of the proficiency underlying both languages, given adequate motivation and exposure to both, within school or the wider environment. SUP (Separate Underlying Proficiency) approach indicates that no such relationship/synergy exists between L1 and L2 language acquisition.
<b>Additive bilingualism</b>	a process by which individuals develop proficiency in a second language subsequent to or simultaneous with the development of proficiency in the primary language, without loss of the primary language; a bilingual situation where the addition of a second language and culture are unlikely to replace or displace the first language and culture
<b>Anomie</b>	A feeling of disorientation and rootlessness common in immigrants. A feeling of dissatisfaction and uncertainty in relationships between an individual learning a language and the language group with which they are trying to integrate.
<b>Authentic language</b>	real or natural language, as used by native speakers of a language in real-life contexts; not artificial or contrived for purposes of learning grammatical forms or vocabulary
<b>BICS</b>	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) are those that are cognitively-undemanding and include known ideas, vocabulary and syntax. They are the aspects of communication that are used daily in routine communicative exchanges (e.g. while dressing, eating, bathing, playing, etc.). BICS skills represent the informal aspects of social talk as well as skills that do not require a high degree of cognition (e.g., naming objects and actions, referring to non-existence, disappearance, rejection, and negation, and so forth). Students demonstrating BICS might recognize new combinations of known words or phrases and produce single words or short phrases. When students begin to acquire a second language, they are typically able to develop BICS within 2-3 years. <i>Most importantly, Cummins cautioned that students should not be placed in learning situations in which a second language (L2) is used just because they have adequate L2 BICS.</i>
<b>CALP</b>	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, or CALP. CALP takes much longer than BICS to develop; usually about 5-7 years. CALP skills are those that are necessary for literacy attainment and academic success. CALP enables students to have academic, analytical conversation and to independently acquire factual information. CALP is used to use information acquired to find relationship, make inferences, and draw conclusions.
<b>CLIL</b> <i>Content and language integrated learning</i>	Involves teaching a curricular subject through the medium of a language other than that normally used. The subject can be entirely unrelated to language learning, such as history lessons being taught in English in a school in Spain. CLIL is taking place and has been found to be effective in all sectors of education from primary through to adult and higher education. Its success has been growing over the past 10 years and continues to do so. <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/language-teaching/doc236_en.htm">http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/language-teaching/doc236_en.htm</a>

<b>Culture</b>	The sum total of the ways of life of a people; includes norms, learned behavior patterns, attitudes, and artifacts; also involves traditions, habits or customs; how people behave, feel and interact; the means by which they order and interpret the world; ways of perceiving, relating and interpreting events based on established social norms; a system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting
<b>Cultural Adaptation/Culture Shock Cycle</b>	Model of what happens when a person is introduced into a new culture and then must return to their home culture. Stages include: (1) Pre-departure anxiety; (2) Arrival honeymoon; (3) Initial culture shock; (4) Surface adjustment; (5) Mental isolation; (6) Return anxiety and (8) Re-entry culture shock.
<b>Cummin's Classification of Language and Content activities</b>	Divided activities/modes of instruction and learning along two continuums (context embedded/reduced and academic and cognitively demanding /undemanding). Instruction should progress from context embedded/academically non-demanding to context reduced/academically demanding. Teacher should be aware of where his instruction falls and how it is relating to the needs of his students who may be in various stages of language acquisition and development
<b>EAL</b>	the field of English as an Additional language (see ESL). In many international schools, students typically speak many languages. English can sometimes be a third or fourth language.
<b>ESL</b>	the field of English as a second language; courses, classes and/or programs designed for students learning English as an additional language.
<b>Home language</b>	language(s) spoken in the home by significant others (e.g., family members, caregivers) who reside in the child's home; sometimes used as a synonym for first language, primary language, or native language
<b>Stages of Language Development (PEPSI)</b>	<p>Level I: Pre-Production Stage (Silent Period): Minimal comprehension, no verbal production.</p> <p>Level II: Early Production Stage. Limited Comprehension; One/two-word response.</p> <p>Level III: Speech Emergence Stage. Increased comprehension; Simple sentences; Some errors in speech.</p> <p>Level IV: Intermediate Fluency Stage. Very good comprehension; More complex sentences; Complex errors in speech.</p>
<b>Subtractive bilingualism</b>	The learning of a majority language at the expense of the first; refers to cases where the first language and culture have low status and where because of this, learners are encouraged to divest themselves of their first language and culture and to replace them with the second language and culture; primary language attrition or loss and cultural anomie (uncertainty, alienation) often result from a subtractive bilingual situation

*This policy will be updated periodically by the Principal.*