

Language and EAL Policy

Abstract

This document is intended to articulate Southbank International School's philosophy of language teaching and learning and to reflect the school mission statement. 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 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 engagements. 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.

Home Language

The term *home language* 'denotes 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 in IB programmes*, 2008).

It is essential for students to maintain their home language 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 home language. It is important for them to be able to read with fluency and express themselves effectively, both orally and in writing. Our aim is

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that students should become confident in the literacy of their own language, value their heritage and increase their intercultural awareness. They are encouraged to explore the history, culture and literature of their own countries.

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

French and Spanish lessons are taught to fluent French and Spanish speakers within the MYP curriculum. A variety of other 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, Language and Literature 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 transdisciplinary nature of language learning. Language learning and teaching immerse students in the dynamics between learning language, learning through language and learning about language. These aspects are interconnected and are used to develop an understanding of how language is learnt and applied (*Halliday, 1985*).

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, viewing, presenting 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, critical thinking ability and literacy skills through literature discussion reading groups, focusing on inference, evaluation and prediction. 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 other words which are integral to communicating written ideas. This builds their knowledge and extends their understanding of vocabulary and spelling conventions.

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Multilingualism, or the use of two or more languages, is a right, is encouraged and is supported through the development of multilingual learning environments and multilingual communities, affirming student identity and agency. *Translanguaging* is the process by which students flexibly draw on known languages, combining elements to meet communicative, social and academic needs. Encouraging children to use their entire language profile independently enables them to build deeper connections and understandings in both social and academic language.

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 focus, as well as key and related concepts. Grammar is taught in context, and students are exposed to a wide range of texts from different periods and places. World literature is a feature in each year of the programme, and consideration is paid to how cultural and historical context impacts the meaning of a text. 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 the aesthetic qualities of literature through the study of a wide range of literary works. 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). Literary works and non-literary texts are examined through the lens of 7 central concepts, and emphasis is placed on cultural and historical context (time and space) and the relationship between texts (intertextuality). 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.

How English Language B is implemented in the MYP

The IB MYP English Language Acquisition (ELA) course supports students for whom English is not a Home Language in developing their English skills across the four main skills areas: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. It is designed to help learners progress from basic to more advanced use of English, giving them the confidence to communicate effectively in academic and everyday situations. At the same time, the course encourages students to explore culture and identity through

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language, fostering open-mindedness, intercultural understanding, and global awareness.

There are 220 minutes timetable over a two week period. Regular formative, summative assessment tasks are used to track student progress. As students progress through the IB MYP ELA course, they may continue to study MYP ELA or switch to MYP English Language & Literature, according to their level of proficiency in the language. In Grade 11, students who have been studying MYP ELA will naturally continue studying DP ELA (HL), but could study DP English Language & Literature if they have completed at least a term in MYP Language and Literature. The choice for DP will also depend on what Home Language, including English (DP group 1) is available or appropriate.

How English B is implemented in the DP

The IB DP English B Higher Level (HL) course is designed for students who already have a strong foundation in English, have completed the MYP ELA course, and wish to refine their skills to an advanced level. The course develops reading, writing, listening, and speaking through engagement with a wide range of authentic texts (both literary and non-literary) and global issues. Students also explore how language relates to culture and identity, encouraging them to think critically, communicate effectively, and appreciate different perspectives. By engaging with authentic texts and meaningful discussions, learners build critical thinking, intercultural awareness, and the ability to communicate effectively in academic, professional, and real-world contexts.

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 for students which encourages rich language use while establishing transdisciplinary/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 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 and writing with a focus on a communicative approach. In the PYP, students learn Spanish once they have been assessed as proficient in English. Spanish instruction is integrated within units of inquiry and taught through stand-alone sessions. In the MYP, students have the opportunity to continue

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studying Spanish or to begin learning French. Students are placed in the appropriate phase based on their language abilities. At Southbank, we offer Phases 1–4 across MYP 1–5. Our students are supported in progressing through the phases according to their individual language abilities.

In the DP, students may continue with the language they studied throughout the MYP or begin a new language, depending on their needs and prior experience. Students may join Language B Standard Level, Language B Higher Level, or Language ab Initio in accordance with their abilities and in alignment with the DP placement guidelines.

IBMYP - Language acquisition

Students entering Grade 6 or other grades chooses between French and Spanish as their second language. During the first week of school, students complete a placement test to determine their current proficiency and are subsequently assigned to the appropriate learning phase (Phases 1–4). Please find a link with the progression here. The program is designed to be dynamic; students may progress through phases within the academic year as their skills develop. Transitions between phases are implemented following consultation with teachers, students and parents to ensure the student is fully supported.

IBDP - Language acquisition

At DP level, students may continue with French and Spanish or try a new language. Upon completion of MYP 5, students are placed into Language B (SL/HL) or Language ab Initio in accordance with the level reached in MYP 5 or DP placement guidelines.

Following the IB recommendations, students with strong language abilities may be placed in Higher Level classes even if they have chosen Standard Level. These students engage with the Higher Level content during common instructional time, but do not attend the additional HL contact hours (Wednesday sessions). These students will still be subject to Standard level assessment criteria.

Through assessments, moderations and discussions among teachers and DP coordinator we review students progress and put strategies in place to help them reach their potential or make any changes if needed.

IBCP

In the Career-related Programme (CP), students may choose to study a Language A and/or a Language Acquisition course as one of their Diploma courses. In addition, students study a Language and Cultural Studies course as part of the IBCP Core.

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Language and Cultural Studies

The LCS approach recognizes that every student already has a unique set of languages and cultural experiences. By encouraging students to explore and represent their linguistic identities (for example, through the *language and cultural portrait*), the program validates and strengthens their home language as a vital part of who they are. This recognition affirms the importance of their home language and encourages students to use it as a foundation for further learning.

Through inquiry-based learning, students reflect on how their home language shapes their identity, communication, and worldview. This reflection deepens their awareness of their own language practices and motivates them to maintain and develop proficiency in their home language. Students engage in activities that allow them to use their home language meaningfully—such as comparing cultural expressions, exploring traditions, or connecting with family and community. These authentic uses reinforce fluency, literacy, and pride in their mother tongue.

In the CP, students develop language acquisition through a balanced approach that combines guided instruction and independent learning. Structured classroom lessons build foundational grammar, vocabulary, and communication skills, while independent study allows students to explore authentic texts, media, and cultural contexts that extend their proficiency beyond the classroom. Students are encouraged to use the target language in practical, professional, and intercultural settings, integrating language learning with their Career-related Studies and Personal and Professional Skills courses. This approach supports both academic growth and real-world communication competence.

English Language Learning

Our language departments welcome students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The programmes are designed to enable English language learners to access our curriculum and engage in all social and enrichment activities at the school. These teachers work closely with classroom teachers to support, advise and assess student work in the classroom. Following consultation between the teachers involved, students are exited from the programme when their language skills reflect their cognitive ability. The primary schools use the WIDA International framework as the main assessment tool, while at MYP the Oxford Placement Testing system is used.

In the PYP, EAL lessons are taught outside of the mainstream classroom in the context of the 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 that of the home language. EAL teachers also support students in their homerooms. In the MYP, the main goal is to equip our students with the linguistic skills necessary to integrate fully into mainstream classes. ELA teachers focus on students' needs

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in order to build student confidence and develop their communicative competence. At Diploma level, English B is offered at Higher Level, for students whose home language is not English. Students are encouraged to take either the Cambridge B2 First or the Cambridge C1 Advanced (formerly FCE and CAE) English tests during MYP, and the Cambridge C1 Advanced during DP.

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, 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. 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.

Library

At Southbank we believe the libraries are the heart of all IB programmes. It is the aim of the PYP, MYP and DP/CP librarians to provide resources and opportunities to foster understanding and appreciation of lifelong 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 home language 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 home language. They also play a key role in supporting the IB programmes and curriculum.

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, organise, 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 language and text. We use technology to motivate and empower language learners. It provides students 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 home language in accordance with the school's Acceptable Use Policy.

Assessment

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Language assessment is continuous and functions within the guidelines of all levels of the International Baccalaureate Programmes. Please refer to the 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 Integrity Policy.

Censorship

Southbank recognises and seeks to understand our community's cultural, religious, moral, and personal ethics, as well as its 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 (September, 2018) 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 70 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 home language are required to complete an approved online English test from Grade 4 to Grade 10 inclusive.

Professional Development

Staff training highlights the importance of an 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.

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.

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