



BISHOP MACKENZIE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
LANGUAGE POLICY

BMIS educates and inspires students to value integrity, cultural diversity, and the pursuit of well-being and excellence. Our school fosters an environment which empowers students to become creative, confident lifelong learners ready to take action in the local and global communities

LANGUAGE POLICY

Our language policy exists to help our students to develop the attributes of communication as described in the IB Learner Profile [1]:

- We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways.
- We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.

Our School

Students at Bishop Mackenzie International School (BMIS) are drawn from the international expatriate and the local Malawian community living in Lilongwe, Malawi, and learn using English as the language of instruction and communication. We are open to children of all nationalities and a wide range of abilities. However, competence in English must be developed by all students in order to achieve certain academic standards within the school.

We also provide students with the opportunity to develop competence in at least one other language. We will ensure that all students undergo an in-depth English language programme through the curriculum and throughout their time in the School – this may involve English Language Learner (ELL) courses, in the PYP; English Language Acquisition in the MYP; and English B in the DP. We also provide additional small group English language support, if necessary.

The majority of our students speak English as their main language, spoken both at school and at home, but equally most of our students are also exposed to another language at home on a regular basis. Chichewa and Memon are the next most common home languages and in total, 60 languages have been identified as being spoken by our students at BMIS[2].

Philosophy

BMIS provides an English medium education programme using the pedagogy and philosophy of the International Baccalaureate Organization that is encapsulated in the three academic programmes: Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP) and Diploma Programme (DP).

The acquisition of language is a dynamic, lifelong process that permeates all learning. Through meaningful interaction, it enables us to communicate with and understand other people and to understand how the world works. Additional languages enrich our intellectual and social growth.

BMIS beliefs and values regarding language:

- Language is a key factor in the development of international understanding
- Language is central to the curriculum and to the medium of inquiry
- Diversity in the levels of language and literacy development is recognized and respected
- Literature is an integral part of the curriculum
- All teachers have a responsibility to address the language needs of their students in the language of instruction.

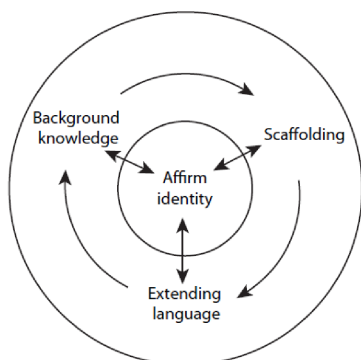
Pedagogy for Language and Learning [3]

Our school wishes to promote a pedagogy that reflects the values, beliefs and understandings of language and learning in the IB programmes. It is our belief that this is essential for all multilingual IB students, including those learning in a language other than their mother tongue, to be able to have access to the curriculum.

Our focus will be on aspects that relate specifically to developing a threshold level of cognitive academic language proficiency (or CALP), which is essential for the participation and engagement that is necessary for subsequent success in learning and knowledge construction.

We believe that there are four dimensions of teaching that are particularly important in ensuring learner participation, promoting engagement and successfully constructing understandings:

- activating prior understanding and building background knowledge
- scaffolding learning
- extending language
- affirming identity



The language and learning cycle of good practice (based on the work of Jim Cummins, 2007)

Language is involved in all learning that happen in our classrooms and it is an essential vehicle for inquiry and the construction of meaning. It empowers the learner and provides an intellectual framework to support conceptual development and critical thinking. Students’ needs are best served when they have opportunities to engage in learning within meaningful contexts, rather than being presented with the learning of language as an incremental series of skills to be acquired. In an inquiry-based classroom, teachers and students enjoy using language, appreciating its functionality and aesthetics. Wherever possible, language should be taught through the relevant, authentic context of the units of inquiry. Regardless of whether language is being taught within or outside the programme of inquiry, it is believed that purposeful inquiry is the way in which students learn best.

Primary Years Programme

The need to communicate is instinctive. The development of language is fundamental to that need to communicate; it supports and enhances our thinking and understanding. Language permeates the world in which we live; it is socially constructed and dependent on the number and nature of our social interactions and relationships. [4]

In the PYP, teaching & learning of language revolve around the planning, which in turn is based on the Language scope & sequence. The Language of instruction is a part of the transdisciplinary programme of inquiry because we believe that students learn language, learn through language and learn about language.

Middle Years Programme

An IB education creates teaching and learning communities and opportunities that help students increase their understanding of language and culture, and become more globally engaged.[5]

MYP students are encouraged to consider issues from multiple perspectives so as to learn about their own and others’ social, national and ethnic cultures and to develop international-mindedness. In all MYP subject groups, communication is both an objective and an assessment criterion.

Diploma Programme

In the Diploma Programme, language courses are offered in two of the subject groups:

- Group 1 - studies in language and/or literature
- Group 2 - language acquisition

The range of courses has been designed to address and acknowledge the complexity and range of language profiles that students may bring to the DP. Our school aims to provide school-supported self-taught literature programmes and tutor-based or online language-acquisition courses, as and when appropriate, and when resources allow, where taught programmes may not be viable.

Our school will provide subject and class teachers with suitable professional development to support language learning.

Whole Language Outcomes

At our school, the teaching of language must address the strands of listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and presenting.

Listening: Students learn to listen attentively and demonstrate consideration for the speaker. They learn to understand and evaluate what they hear, to think about both literal and inferred meanings, and to respond appropriately. They learn to listen for specific information, considering the context, the speaker and the audience.

Speaking: Students use oral language to ask and answer questions; collect information, relate and retell; persuade; talk about needs, feelings, ideas, and opinions; and to contribute to discussions in a range of formal and informal situations. Students learn to respond confidently, appropriately and relevantly considering the context, the speaker and the audience. They develop their pronunciation, intonation and fluency. They expand their vocabulary and start using more complex grammatical sentences.

Reading: Students read to gain meaning from text, and for enjoyment. The students learn to use a variety of strategies to gain meaning, including their understanding of phonics, the use of context clues, and visual prompts. The process of reading is interactive and involves the reader's purpose for reading, the reader's prior knowledge and experience, and the purpose and the structure of the text itself. Students need to learn how to understand, interpret and respond to the ideas, attitudes and feelings expressed in various texts; to think critically about what they read; and to be able to make predictions and inferences based on information that is both explicit and implicit in a text.

Writing: Students write as a means to remember, develop, organise, gain self-knowledge and communicate ideas, feelings and information. Purpose and audience contribute to the form and substance of writing as well as to its style and tone. Students learn to write through a developmental process. They need to focus first on meaning rather than accuracy. Grammar, spelling, handwriting, punctuation and paragraphing should be taught gradually through writing practice. The writing process involves creating an environment where students can acquire the skills to achieve written products for a variety of purposes.

The written product can be formal, informal, personal or reflective.

Viewing and Presenting: Students learn to present and interpret visuals, broadening the ways in which they can understand and communicate their learning. Acquiring skills related to advanced technology and media gives students the opportunity to communicate, respond and comprehend thoughts, ideas, and feelings. A variety of formats including visual, (e.g., photographs, graphs, cartoons), dramatic (e.g., tableaux, improvisations, live theatre), and multimedia (e.g., videos, television, computer) engages viewers allowing them instant access to data. Learning to understand and use different media expands the sources of information and expressive abilities of students.

English as Language of Instruction

Language instruction involves the belief that planning, teaching, assessing and reflecting are interconnected processes. Language support occurs throughout the school. Year group teachers (Primary) and class teachers (Secondary) are responsible for the direct instruction and assessment of student language acquisition and for identifying each student's individual needs. Language support is organized in and out of the classroom through whole group, small group, and individualized instruction. Additional support is also provided by the English Language Support teachers in case of limited English proficiency and by the Educational Support team to scaffold students' language acquisition and skills.

Strategies to collect evidence for student assessment may include writing samples, classroom rubrics, checklists, self and peer assessments, conferencing and benchmark assessments, observations, and running records. This data is used to guide instruction, monitor progress, foster student achievement, and offer differentiated language learning strategies. These strategies form an essential part of the school's assessment and reporting policies.

Teachers use a variety of methodologies to create better language understanding.

Literacy instruction in the PYP is integrated as much as possible into the units of inquiry and is supported by a variety of resources including: leveled readers, big books, guided reading books, interactive whiteboard resources, Razkids, technology and apps, as well as library resources. Our substantial collection of fiction and non-fiction readers is available to differentiate instruction in language development. We also provide Language Support for English Language Learners (ELL), which can be timetabled against French where appropriate.

In the MYP, BMIS offers English Language Acquisition as an option. Students are further supported by English Language Support (timetabled against Design), and Additional English Language Support (timetabled against Language Acquisition French/Spanish) if necessary (refer to the 'Secondary Language Pathways').

In the DP BMIS offers English Language A and B. When students study English B, their Language A is studied as a self-taught course. Currently the School provides students with the opportunity to study Literature or Language and Literature at both SL and HL. The focus of both courses is trying to deviate from the traditional path of literary study; new text-types (graphic novels, blogs, film etc.) are being explored and developed. The Language and Literature course studies language in cultural context and language and mass communication. The texts are chosen from a prescribed list of authors identified by the IB, in combination with free choice.

French or Spanish as Additional Language

The IB acknowledges that learning additional languages greatly contributes to the holistic development of students. Proficiency in a second language gives students access to a broader range of input, experiences and perspectives. The study of another language aims to encourage in the student a respect for and understanding of other languages and cultures.

The exploration of ideas in another language can enrich intercultural competence as well as the understanding of the concepts of structures in our student's English and home languages. The promotion of international-mindedness in our school is enhanced by our commitment to additional language learning.

At BMIS the modern language courses use a balance between approaches to learning that are teacher-centered and those that are learner-centered. The courses develop students' linguistic abilities through the development of receptive, productive and interactive skills. Specific strategies, including the Constructivist Approach and the Communicative Approach are used.

In the PYP, French is taught as an additional language from Years 2 to 6. The approach to language teaching is that it connects with the units of inquiry. A variety of resources are used, including audio-visuals and integrated technology. Students acquire language through a focus on meaning rather than grammar. French books and materials are available in the library and reinforce practice of our additional language at home.

The principal aim of Language B at secondary level is to encourage students to gain competence in a modern language other than their mother tongue. In the MYP French, Spanish and English are offered. Within the framework of a communicative approach, students learn the structure of the language in order to be able to express themselves in a range of situations.

Language Acquisition in the MYP

Y6-7 transition - student placement

All students transitioning from BMIS PYP to MYP will be given the option to study French/Spanish/English (where appropriate) as a second language.

Student placement when arriving to BMIS

The admissions form will detail the following and will be forwarded to the Languages HOD

1. The language/s the student has previously studied as an additional language
2. Which curriculum the student was following (MYP, IGCSE, International school, private or public schools, ...)
3. How many years the student learned the language
4. If possible, results and grades from the previous school in the language
5. Mother tongue and additional language/s spoken at home (spoken/written/read)

Issue a **30 minute placement test** based on criteria B, C and D and a **10 minute verbal interview** to be scheduled by the Languages HOD.

Phase movement

The MYP Language Acquisition Guide suggests that, 'in most cases, students exiting from phase 4 will have had the equivalent of at least four years of additional language learning' (21). It is typical that learning development in Phase 2 is over two years.

The department will review the students' phases **mid-year** (December) and at **the end of the academic year** (June). The decision for student phase progression will be informed by the following:

- Consolidation of skills and results (minimum 1 year)
- Results: Criteria A and B (minimum 5 each)
- Results: Criteria C (minimum 5) and D (minimum 6) for both spoken and written tasks
- Consultation with the descriptors in MYP Language Acquisition global proficiency table found on p.25 of the MYP Language Acquisition subject guide.

The students' success in mastering the skills in the continuum can be found on pp. 12-14 of the MYP Language Acquisition subject guide.

The final decision will be taken in consultation with the subject teacher, HOD, and MYP Coordinator.

Language B in the Diploma Programme

In the DP BMIS offers Language B English, French, Spanish and Ab Initio Spanish as part of group 2 of the IB Diploma. These language acquisition courses are designed to provide students with the necessary skills and intercultural understanding to enable them to communicate successfully in an environment where the language studied is spoken. The student is encouraged to go beyond the classroom, expanding an awareness of the world and fostering respect for cultural diversity.

In accordance with IB philosophy, we expect sustained language learning across the MYP and DP, unless satisfactory proficiency is achieved in MYP Phase 4 to transfer to another language. Only in consultation with the programme coordinators will a student be able to change their language option. Further to this:

- Students who have studied French will be placed in DP French B. Students who have studied Spanish will be placed in DP Spanish B.
- Spanish “ab initio” is for students new to BMIS who have not studied French or Spanish. In addition, BMIS students who have achieved French B Phase 4 may choose to study “ab initio” in Spanish in order to widen their strong language skills.
- Students with a strong mother-tongue background may choose to study a Literature A course in that language with an external private tutor. BMIS will support the tutor and the student. Students who achieve success in both English A and another Language A will be in a position to qualify for the award of a Bilingual Diploma from the IB.
- Students whose proficiency in English is insufficient for English A will be placed in English B. Full IB Diploma students will be required to follow a Language A in their mother-tongue
- There are other Language courses provided on-line by Pamoja (licensed by the IBO).

Language Support (English)

Language Support is offered to our English Language Learners (ELL). Students in both Primary and Secondary sections of the School from all linguistic backgrounds, who are identified as being unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, are helped to achieve their potential in educational, social and cultural contexts at school. Language Support helps students to achieve accurate and confident use of English across the curriculum developing communicative skills, including the language of critical thinking and problem solving, and the use of creative language for self-expression.

New students to the school who are identified as needing Language Support are assessed on entry to the School through tests as well as through an interview with the Language Support teacher and/or IB Coordinator and/or the relevant Head Teacher (see Admissions Policy and Procedure). Based on admissions assessments, students may then be identified as requiring Language Support within the school. Existing students may be identified as requiring further Language Support based on observations from classroom teachers. The relevant Learning Support teacher will make a judgment on the level of support based on assessments and discussions with class teachers. The results of tests are made known to all subject teachers so that they are aware of any difficulties the student may encounter within their classroom.

Language Support is available for students through a combination of in-class and out-of-class support. ELL students also receive subject support for which subject teachers collaborate with the Language Support teacher/s to identify content skills needed for subject learning. Whenever possible, first language materials such as translation devices are used to help students access the curriculum. Progress is monitored both informally and formally by the Language Support teacher and class/subject teachers.

Students are carefully monitored by the Language Support teacher in collaboration with the class/subject teachers. The successful exit from Language Support involves discussions about the individual student’s progress with the teachers (Primary) and teacher of English Language and subject teachers (Secondary) and may involve an age appropriate Exit Test (Primary/Secondary).

Mother-Tongue Support

As IB educators, it is our belief that mother tongue language is crucial for maintaining age appropriate cognitive development, cultural identity and emotional stability. It is our responsibility to recognize and support each and every aspect of language development and provide opportunities for individual students, parents and families to share their heritage with us.

Parents are encouraged to promote language learning at home, to read stories to their children, and to engage with them in their mother tongue. To this end, resources are available in the library to support other languages being spoken at home and their culture. Parents are provided with contact details for mother tongue language support and learning groups in Lilongwe, where these exist. Parents and community members are also welcomed to use the

school facility for activities and clubs that support mother tongue development, as per use of school grounds and facility policy.

Due to the wide diversity of our home languages, we are not able to offer direct mother tongue support for languages not taught at the school. When possible, our practice is to pair up students with buddies and/or place them with year group teachers who speak that language. We also continue to reach out to the local and global community to help source tutors who can provide mother tongue support.

Host-Country Language

The official languages of the host country are Chichewa and English. BMIS encourages Chichewa speaking staff to speak their language to the students, to reinforce instructions and routines. We recognize our host-country language through bilingual signage around the school to guide our visitors. The library has, and continues to add to, resources in Chichewa.

As we value the culture of our host country, our students have opportunities to appreciate Malawian culture, literature, and performance. Service also plays an important role in appreciation of host-country language and culture.

Procedure Development

Procedures for the implementation of this policy should be developed by the Primary Head Teacher and the Secondary Head Teacher, together with the three IB programme coordinators, Educational Support Coordinator(s) and teachers and heads of languages in Secondary. Vertical alignment of the policy across the three IB programmes should be monitored through the regular refinement of these procedures following regular collaboration between all of the above stakeholders.

Policy Review

This policy, and associated procedures, must be reviewed on a regular basis. Factors to consider when reflecting on the periodicity of the policy review, should include the periodicity of the review and renewal of IBO curriculum guides, any significant changes in the school student population, and changes to legal requirements for language provision in the host country.

A survey of languages in the school community should be conducted at least every four years.

[1] IB Learner Profile (© IBO 2013)

[2] BMIS community language survey (December 2017)

[3] Based on extracts from *Language and learning in IB programmes* (© IBO 2011)

[4] Making the PYP happen (© IBO 2009)

[5] MYP: From principles into practice (© IBO 2017)

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