



Language Policy

I. Philosophy

The Diocesan Boys' School (DBS) derives its language philosophy from the school's mission and objectives and from existing understanding about language acquisition and how language is best learned within the educational context of Hong Kong, much of which is aptly summarised in the IB publication "Language and Learning in IB Programmes". Teaching and learning at DBS is based on the beliefs that through language learning we:

- enhance self-esteem and personal development, thus adopting the model of 'additive multilingualism' (Cenoz & Genesee);
- affirm cultural identity and to appreciate a diversity of cultures both within Hong Kong and in other cultural contexts;
- encourage intercultural awareness, new perspectives; and
- develop a deeper understanding of ourselves and ways in which to acquire, appreciate, and think critically about the linguistic skills necessary to be effective global citizens.

We believe the awareness and the explicit teaching of language as a developmental tool extends to all curricula, thus all teachers are responsible for language development. The aim is also to empower students to develop a unique cultural identity and to, according to the DBS school mission and objectives, "offer a well-balanced education for the development of the whole person" (DBS). This links to our philosophy of international mindedness in which we seek to value ourselves and where we come from, as well as valuing other people, places and values. Through language, in schooling we bring ourselves and others 'into fruitful contact in studies, thought and in life'.

II. School Language Profile

As an English Medium Instruction (EMI) school, English is used in all classrooms, except Chinese and French lessons, by all teachers. For the majority of our students, their mother tongue is Cantonese. However, a portion of our student body would consider English as their mother tongue. Due to the unique situation of Hong Kong as China's international city, the school endeavours to encourage intensive development of both English and Chinese from primary through secondary education.

In line with the school's vision and mission, we aim to help students be creative and dynamic



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citizens who are successful in rapidly advancing pluralistic societies, both in Hong Kong and overseas. To this end, the school provides students with opportunities to study English, Chinese (Putonghua and Cantonese), French and other languages such as Spanish, Japanese and German, in order to build a strong multi-lingual foundation.

As required by the Education Bureau, all students study Chinese, while some also take a third language.

Entry into the DBS Bridging Year Language Programmes is based on students' previous results and on written and oral testing. The process of judging whether or not a student is suitable for English A and Chinese A remains a formidable task as it is difficult to judge how each individual will develop linguistically. For those students who are challenged by their lack of proficiency in English or Chinese, it is their keen attitude and willingness to improve that remains the benchmark. All students are made well aware of potential challenges before acceptance onto the Bridging Year Language Programmes.

Entry into DBS IB Language Programmes is based on students' grades as they are awarded during the Bridging Year. At present, we give regular feedback to parents on the progress of students in English, Chinese and/or French. For those students who we predict could struggle to attain Level 4 or below in an IB subject, students are given advice on how to improve before beginning the IB Diploma. We do not deny entry to students; however, we may strongly advise a student to tailor his language choice based on his Bridging Year performance.

Conventions for both British and American English are taught and made explicit to students, who are at liberty to use either so long as they do so consistently. Best practices for academic integrity, including a range of styles for referencing and citing works are explicitly taught in the course. The preferred style is MLA, though there is flexibility for subjects to choose a style more suitable to their discipline.

DBS takes pride in all languages spoken within the school community and sees bilingualism and multilingualism as not only a key asset of its students, but also, as reinforced in the Programme Standards and Practices 2020, as "a fact, a right, and a resource for learning." IB teachers



encourage the use of translanguaging to support learning. This empowers students to use their linguistic resources to explore concepts, develop their knowledge, make connections between ideas and to be heard (EAL Journal). Students should use this respectfully and be inclusive in their use of language. Teachers are of the understanding that there are situations and contexts in which the mother tongue must be allowed for the social and developmental well-being of the students.

Due to the language-intensive environment of the IBDP, each applicant's language abilities are assessed prior to their entrance into the G10 Bridging Year. Each applicant's written, oral, and reading ability is assessed in English and either Chinese or French. Only students capable of meeting the challenges of two language courses in the Grade 10 Bridging Year are admitted. In addition, language goals and objectives are developed from this point and discussed with students to ensure that all students make appropriate decisions for language and subject choices in the IBDP. When significant language concerns present themselves, these are discussed in consultation with parents to foresee what additional language support may be needed.

III. Pedagogy and Practice

A. Staff Development

DBS has a history of maintaining a high number of multilingual staff. Currently, all teachers are fluent English speakers and many can communicate in a second language. Ongoing professional development programmes specifically aimed at strengthening English as a medium of instruction in non-language specific subjects are provided yearly to ensure the school's ability to consistently reinforce a bilingual learning atmosphere.

As all teachers are language teachers, professional development is encouraged and supported by the school. Teachers may request funding for professional development to support language learning and teaching. Courses suggested include:

- Centre for Educators of BMLs: Bilingual & Multilingual Learners From the Inside Out
- Lexis Education: Teaching in English in multilingual classrooms: Language in learning across the curriculum (TEMC: LiLAC)

B. Teaching Practices



DBS teachers are encouraged to nurture diverse teaching methods and philosophies, as well as to work towards common understandings of “best practices” in teaching. Work is currently being done to further specify and articulate prescribed teaching practices with the implementation and application of the IBO’s Approaches to Teaching and Learning (ATL) framework. Many of the approaches to learning skills (such as research, communication, and social skills) are described in their relationship to language development in other sections of this document. Of particular importance to approaches to teaching and language are the beliefs that learning and language should be taught in authentic contexts, that the teaching of language should allow for collaboration and social construction of knowledge, and that the diverse learning styles of students apply to the teaching and development of language as well. Some common agreements related to language teaching are listed below. The use of diverse teaching methods and practices, including the four dimensions of teaching: 1) activating prior knowledge, 2) scaffolding learning, 3) extending language, and 4) affirming identity (Cummins cited in Inugai-Dixon 2007). These four dimensions are used to promote not only the discrete language skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing, but also interpersonal communicative skills, linguistic and literary analysis, and evaluation skills. These are taught across the curriculum so that students may both learn *through* a language as well as *about* a language.

C. Common teaching practices:

As we believe that all teachers are teachers of language, a number of strategies are used across the curriculum to support language development. These include:

- Providing a balanced programme of instruction which includes reading, speaking, listening and writing.
- Activating prior understanding and contextualising the background knowledge of students.
- Scaffolding learning and new understandings as part of a teaching and learning cycle.
- Deconstructing texts and genres of writing common to different subject areas.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of language patterns.
- Increasing the vocabulary and lexical field, encouraging the awareness of collocations.



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- Encouraging authentic language use.
- Promoting school-wide and extra-curricular uses of language.
- Recognising student work through school publications, such as the school paper and literary magazine.
- Practising language-focused peer- and self-assessment strategies.
- Developing a love of language and literature, which will be included in the syllabus at all levels of primary and secondary schooling.
- Developing a life-long habit of reading and language growth.

IV. Inclusion and Equity: Language Support

Our learners are supported to develop their academic writing. Grade 10 Skills Class and language classes include sessions on academic writing, research and presentation skills, as well as a writing workshop to expose students to different language registers. Students are taught to recognise and produce “academic writing” and access the specialised vocabulary and terminology of different subject areas. Different language pathways are available for students in the IBDP, and students are advised by their teachers to choose the most appropriate path for their language needs.

Taking into account our selective intake, as outlined in our Admissions Policy, we strive to be inclusive to the extent that we accurately represent and address the requirements of our incoming students. Students with specific language needs are discussed on a case by case basis during the admissions process.



V. Mother Tongue Support

We promote a class and school environment that welcomes and embraces the diversity of languages, cultures and perspectives. For our students who identify Cantonese as their mother-tongue or “strongest” language, a number of support systems are in place to aid in the continued development of their Cantonese, particularly as a language for academic use. Those students who identify English as their mother-tongue are supported through English Medium of Instruction classes. Students have the additional option of studying the International Baccalaureate Bilingual Diploma Programme.

Mother tongue development is supported in the following ways:

- Mother-tongue Cantonese speakers who choose a third language, such as French B or Ab Initio, will still be provided with opportunities for the development of Cantonese;
- Use of Cantonese as a support language by bi-lingual teachers for courses that are otherwise taught in English;
- Opportunities beyond the classroom such as clubs and societies offered by the school, including the Chinese Culture Club and Chinese Debate team;
- Use their home language to explore and explain concepts to one another as an aid to understanding vocabulary and concepts delivered in the languages of instruction;
- Parent information sessions about language acquisition and additive bi/multilingualism; and
- Provision of library resources in and about the languages used by the learners.

VI. Physical and Virtual Resources to Support Language Development

The IB Library is well stocked with texts in a range of languages. While predominantly consisting of books in English, there are also resources available in Chinese and French. The IB Library holds subscriptions to a range of publications and supporting resources. The Librarian is bilingual and able to communicate with learners according to their strongest language. The Librarian also supports students with study and research skills.



VII. Ongoing Evaluation of Language Goals

- Parent feedback and input regarding language options at DBS
- Standardising language and referencing conventions
- Develop standardised rubrics and criteria for assessment at all levels, including the junior school
- Further increase communication and cooperation between DBS Primary and Secondary divisions, including teacher observations and team teaching
- Increase communication and cooperation between junior and senior forms
- Re-evaluate DBS' entry requirements for all Grade 10 Bridging Language Courses and further develop entry requirements into language options in the IB Diploma Programme
- From 2021, the EDB has made it mandatory that all students study Chinese. DBS is working towards its inclusion alongside the IB curriculum.

VII. Ongoing Review and Communication of Language Goals

- This policy will be subject to annual review by Heads of Groups who will keep it updated. The policies, alongside other key policies of the school, will also be discussed at annual end of year meetings with the staff at large, who may contribute to the updating, discussion and direction of the policy
- This policy, alongside other key policies, is available to all stakeholders on the school website to ensure transparency and clear communication of language goals.

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Works Cited

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