

# British International School Istanbul

## Languages Policy

Reviewed March 2016

### 1. MISSION; PURPOSE AND AIMS

#### A. MISSION

*The British International School Istanbul provides a caring international environment, fostering cultural diversity. Individual students achieve their full academic potential, inspired to become lifelong learners and responsible citizens of the global community.*

The BISI mission statement is the foundation for our language policy. As language forms the basis for all learning, this policy is critical for helping the school to achieve its mission. The language policy aspires to fulfill each aspect of the mission statement as follows:

#### **As a caring and international environment, fostering cultural diversity**

While English is the language of instruction, the language policy allows for students to inquire in the mother tongue and aspires to multilingualism. The school is committed to providing as much diversity of language instruction as possible.

The language policy validates the equal status of all languages. It endorses an awareness of the host country's culture and language by teaching Turkish at all acquisition levels throughout Key Stage 3 and offering it as an option for native speakers at IGCSE and IBDP levels. The mother tongue programme in each section of the school reinforces literacy and cultural identity and reflects the multilingual society we live in. The modern foreign languages programme develops understanding and respect for other cultures.

#### **Achieving full academic potential**

The language policy recognises the transfer of cognitive skills from the mother tongue to English and vice versa and the acquisition of additional languages. This process encourages the acquisition of higher order thinking skills and development of multiple perspectives. The policy also recognises the importance of all teachers differentiating instruction for students at different levels of language acquisition.

#### **Becoming lifelong learners**

The language policy promotes lifelong learning. Developing language learning skills gives students the capacity to solve problems, think critically and act creatively. Language empowers students to understand, interpret and respond to ideas, attitudes and feelings. Information literacy and technology also provide a gateway to life-long learning and a rich range of language learning opportunities.

## **Assuming responsibility**

The language policy supports the shared responsibility of all teachers, students and parents for **all** students' language development. All teachers and students are encouraged to assume the responsibility to be language learners.

### **B. PURPOSE OF THE LANGUAGE POLICY**

This language policy is a working document developed within the secondary school. The policy is consistent with the stipulated principles and practices of the IBO. This document outlines our school's linguistic and academic goals and defines the programme designed to help our students attain these goals.

This policy is intended to provide an overview and guiding principles for language learning at BISI which permeates the entire school curriculum through authentic contexts in a culturally rich and diverse environment. Our policy is a statement of agreement—one to which the staff and the BISI community are asked to commit to so our school can achieve its mission.

### **C. BELIEFS AND AIMS**

We aim to nurture an appreciation of the richness and diversity of language. Language does much more than promote cognitive growth; it is crucial for maintaining cultural identity and emotional stability. The acquisition of more than one language and maintenance of the mother tongue enrich personal growth and help facilitate international understanding. As language, by its very nature, is integrated into all areas of the curriculum every teacher within the school is considered a language teacher.

At BISI, we aim to foster in students the ability to think and express themselves with precision, clarity, confidence and imagination in at least two languages. Language development in more than one language enriches personal growth, provides cognitive advantages and is essential to the development of international mindedness. We strive to address the particular challenges of those students who are learning in a language other than their mother tongue by providing an integrated, well-implemented English as an Additional or Second Language (EAL or ESL) programme. We endeavour to integrate students' cultural and linguistic heritage throughout the curriculum.

## **2. LANGUAGE PROFILE AND ADMISSIONS POLICIES**

### **A. BISI Language Profile**

Approximately 80% of our student body speaks English as an additional language. They have over 30 different mother tongues and come from approximately 55 different countries. All of our administrative and teaching staff speak English and many are fluent in at least one other language.

### **B. Admissions Policies**

Applicants are required to complete a questionnaire that indicates their proficiency in their mother tongue, English and other languages. In the Secondary School, any application for a student who indicates that English is not their mother tongue will be reviewed by the English department as part of the admissions policy.

Admissions will notify the English department of all EAL/ESL student applicants. All applicants are required to take CAT-4 tests to indicate their strengths, weaknesses and learning preferences.

## **3. LANGUAGE PROGRAMMES OVERVIEW**

### **A. Pedagogy**

At BISI, we recognise that all teachers are also language teachers who have the responsibility to facilitate language acquisition and promote communication skills through their grade level and content area classes.

### **B. Assessment**

While language acquisition follows distinct stages, students' rate of acquisition varies greatly from individual to individual. Therefore, language teachers assess all language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), regularly differentiating through scaffolding or extension as required. Formative and summative assessments in the classroom provide information on language growth. Language teachers regularly standardise students' work to ensure a fair application of assessment criteria (UK National Curriculum Levels, IGCSE and IBDP). Standardised tests and external examinations in the Secondary School also provide evidence of language acquisition levels.

Students who are identified as requiring additional support in English to access the curriculum will be placed in the appropriate English language acquisition class and assessed regularly to monitor progress. A student may be exited from some or all of the scheduled EAL/ESL classes when the student can participate fully in aspects the regular educational programme. When evaluating a student's possible exit, a team consisting of the EAL/ESL teacher, a classroom teacher and a Leadership team member will use information from several sources to make the determination to exit the student from the programme. Parents

will be informed about the decision before the transfer takes place.

### **C. Professional Development**

As it is an expectation for all teachers to be language teachers, training focused on integrated language instruction should be offered throughout the year.

## 4. LANGUAGE A AND MOTHER TONGUE PROGRAMMES

All students are required to study a language A in the IGCSE and IBDP, which in some cases is the continued study of the students' mother tongue. BISI offers English and Turkish as taught language A and supports the study of the student's mother tongue. BISI believes that developing a child's mother tongue can accelerate the rate of English language acquisition, support achievement in all subject areas, increase self-esteem, and enhance intercultural understanding and international-mindedness.

### A. English

In each level of the school, students study English language and literature. When students begin the IGCSE or IBDP programmes, they may study English as their language A if their skills in all four language areas (reading, writing, listening, speaking) enable them to access this curriculum.

### B. Turkish

Native Turkish speakers receive language instruction in their mother tongue beginning in Year 7. Native Turkish speakers in the IGCSE and IBDP programmes have the opportunity to study Turkish at the language A level.

### C. Other Mother Tongues

Mother tongue development opportunities are offered for students on a regular basis - outside the school timetable - from Primary through to Year 13. In 2017-18 there were mother tongue classes in Bulgarian, Chinese, Dutch, French, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Turkish.

## 5. ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION PROGRAMME

### A. EAL and ESL

English language learners who are unable to fully access the academic curriculum delivered in English receive specialised instruction in English language acquisition from qualified staff on a regular basis. EAL and ESL classes are normally scheduled against MFL and/or Turkish classes but can take place at other times as appropriate. In Key Stage 4 students receive additional individualised or small group English and academic support scheduled as appropriate.

### B. English Language B Classes

In IGCSE and IBDP, EAL/ESL students study English as their language B course. This course

follows the IGCSE and IBDP curricula and develops students' language and literacy competence in English as well as intercultural competence. The English language B classes are scheduled against the English language A classes.

## 6. LANGUAGE B AND OTHER LANGUAGES

Studying a third language (in addition to English and Turkish) is a requirement for all students in Years 7 to 9. French, Spanish, German and English are offered as additional languages in Years 7 to 11, and as IB Diploma language B Higher Level and Standard Level in Years 12 and 13. The BISI IBDP admission policy dictates that for most subjects a student requires at least a grade B in a subject at IGCSE level to take the subject at Higher Level in the IBDP. The Modern Languages Department recommends an A or A\* at IGCSE to do HL Language B.

### A. Turkish

Native or close to native speakers can take Turkish first language and language A classes at IGCSE and IBDP.

### B. French, German and Spanish

While a student's previous knowledge or exposure to the target language is ascertained on the admissions forms, Spanish, German and French classes consist of mixed ability levels and teachers differentiate instruction to meet the needs of the various language acquisition levels in each class and in key stage 3 are expected to cater to the needs of beginners. If student numbers are sufficient; French and/or Spanish can be split into two classes of differing ability. Students entering Spanish, German or French classes as beginners will be assessed with appropriate criteria for reporting purposes. Mother tongue French, German and Spanish speaking students may not study their mother tongue in these classes.

### C. English

As described under the English Language Acquisition section, English language learners may study English as a second language or Language B at the IGCSE and IBDP level. These courses develop students' language and literacy competence in English as well as intercultural competence. In the IBDP, students may study English language B at higher or standard level.

### D. Ab Initio

In the IBDP, students may study French or Spanish as beginners (ab initio SL) if they have had minimal exposure to the language previously. A student **will not** be allowed to begin a language ab initio course if:

1. it is their native language
2. if they have studied that language for **more than** two years immediately prior to starting Year 12, or
3. in the event they have taken an IGCSE in the language, achieved a grade C or higher at IGCSE.

## **7. SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **A. Language Learning and The Library**

The school libraries stock books in languages other than English. Some mother tongue classes take place in the library and students also have access to the internet in the libraries.

### **B. Learning Support**

The British International School Istanbul ensures that students with learning support needs are given linguistic opportunities in terms of external multilingual learning support.

External multilingual provisions are available for a range of learning support needs in Istanbul and the Learning Support department can assist pupils and their parents receive access to a service that is multilingual.

## **8. PARENTS AND COMMUNITY**

### **A. Parental Involvement**

Parents are an integral part of our community of learners and can provide tremendous support for language learning at BISI. Parents are involved as mother tongue teachers and provide resources for the mother tongue programmes.

### **B. Language Provision for the BISI Community**

Turkish classes are arranged for new staff during their induction week. Further classes are available and advertised both in and out of school.

### **C. Published Materials**

Students, parents and staff members at BISI originate from different countries and educational systems. To maintain consistency in published materials, British English spelling will be used for our formal written documentation. However, teachers and students may use their native country's spelling and punctuation for all other work provided it is employed consistently throughout the document.

## **9. REVIEW PROCESS**

The language policy will be reviewed regularly as part of the curriculum review cycle and as part of the whole school improvement plan.

The Leadership team will review the implementation of the policy in classrooms and throughout the school on a regular basis as part of the appraisal process.

## 10. REFERENCES

Allen, Allen M. *Thought, Word and Deed: The Roles of Cognition, Language and Culture in Teaching and Learning in IB World Schools*. International Baccalaureate Organization, 1 May 2011.

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### GLOSSARY

**EAL** = English as an Additional Language

**ESL** = English as a Second Language

**IB** = International Baccalaureate

**IBDP** = International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

**IGCSE** = International General Certificate of Secondary Education