

**Leipzig International School
Language Policy
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Purpose of this document

This document outlines our school's language policy. Its aim is to clarify what we believe about languages, about language learning and education, and about the link between language and academic success at our school. This document outlines how we put these beliefs into practice.

This language policy serves as a guideline for teachers, administrators and families, as well as a touchstone as we make decisions that affect the school and our students. In particular, the policy should inform decisions regarding organisation, programming, resourcing and curriculum. It can, and should, spark discussion and reflection.

As a working document, the language policy will need review and revision to reflect the school's changing needs.

Our School Context

Leipzig International School serves approximately 575 international and local students in the Leipzig area with a high-quality English language education.

The school includes a Pre-school (from the age of 3), a Primary School (up through Grade 5), and a Secondary School (Grades 6 – 12). From Pre-school through Grade 8, the curriculum is based on the English National Curriculum. To this end, the Primary school uses the Cambridge International Primary Programme, while the Secondary is in the process of implementing the Cambridge Lower Secondary Programme. From Grade 9 on, the Secondary school offers IGCSE exam courses (Grades 9-10) and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Years Programme (Grades 11-12).

The average class size at LIS is 17 students, the majority of whom come from German or dual German-other mother tongue homes.

Statement of Beliefs

The following statements outline what we believe about language, language learning and education. They provide the basis for our practices and procedures.

1. Language is our main means of thinking and communicating, so it is intrinsic to the learning of all subjects.
2. Language learning is a complex, interactive process. It involves expressing thoughts and ideas and understanding them in social and academic contexts through speaking, writing, reading and listening.
3. A second language is best acquired when:
 - a. there is a safe and positive environment
 - b. students have a strong mother tongue base

- c. the school cultivates an atmosphere of open-mindedness and respect for linguistic and cultural diversity, and values a student's home language and culture
 - d. students have the opportunity to learn through and about language across the content curriculum
 - e. it is contextualised within content material and, where appropriate, focused on to encourage language development and clarify the linguistic demands made upon the learner
 - f. appropriate second language support is in place.
4. At LIS, English is the primary language of instruction and communication and is critical to our students' academic success. We value all languages, including our student's mother tongues the host country language and foreign languages taught in the school.
 5. All staff share responsibility to support language development. There is a potential for language to be developed in every subject area and we are committed to doing this.
 6. We aim to have a curriculum that is appropriately challenging for native English speakers and supportive of non-native English speakers. The same aim holds true for our teaching of the host country language, German.
 7. Each student's mother tongue has a critical role in:
 - a. establishing the foundation for thinking processes;
 - b. cultural identity;
 - c. developing second language proficiency.
 We therefore value bilingualism, specifically, a bilingualism that *adds* English to the mother tongue, while the mother tongue continues to be developed.
 8. LIS families have a key role to play in supporting their children's language development and celebrating their cultural identities.

Putting Beliefs into Practice

As a result of the above beliefs, LIS is committed to:

1. Teaching practices supportive of language learning, including language based activities with scaffolding in all subject areas
2. Explicit teaching of language use in different genres and modelling language for the students; to show the links between reading, writing, speaking and listening.
3. Teaching foreign languages through language with a native language teacher, as early as possible, using real life contexts, whilst offering students varied resources and allowing them to use their mother tongue resources whenever appropriate.
4. Consistency in using English as the language of instruction and communication, whilst allowing and encouraging students to use their mother tongue where it scaffolds their learning. Also for consistency, all official school documents will follow British English conventions.
5. Cross-curricular collaboration among teachers, in-service training and professional development; resourcing classrooms and the school library with materials to help teachers develop solid language teaching practices.

6. Streaming of language courses where appropriate and differentiated activities in all classrooms for all subjects.
7. Providing support for Mother Tongue instruction.
8. Raising awareness of language related issues within the school community and involving parents in planning their children's language development.

We will regularly review this language policy in order to put our beliefs into practice.

Specific Language Programme Overviews

English

Primary

English language and literacy are taught both separately and through units of study in the homeroom class. Using the Cambridge International Primary Programme as a basis, students learn about and through English, the school's language of instruction.

Secondary

Students are taught in English language and literature in their homeroom groups in Grades 6-8, unless in an ESL class. Grades 6-8 follow a core programme based on the Cambridge Lower Secondary curriculum. They study a range of fiction (drama, poetry, prose) and non-fiction genres, also expanding their knowledge about the language through class- and homework. In Grades 9 and 10, students are placed in IGCSE First Language English. Grades 11 and 12 offers the IB Diploma program and students are placed in IB English A1 or IB English A2.

ESL

Pre-school

All Pre-school classes offer a highly scaffolded, contextualised environment for English language learning, with a focus on developing oral language skills and vocabulary. There are currently no separate ESL classes for Pre-school students. ESL staff provides general advice and specific teaching strategies/suggestions to Pre-school staff to support English language enrichment in the classroom.

Primary

ESL students are grouped according to proficiency level (Beginner or Intermediate) and receive ESL support for up to 4 periods a week. ESL teachers' work closely with the homeroom staff to ensure that students receive language-targeted teaching that also supports mainstream classroom themes, topics and content where possible.

All Primary students from Grades 2-5 are assessed on their written English skills at the beginning of the year. Other forms of assessment include teacher observations, writing samples, reading comprehension tasks and in-class work. The Language Assessment Scales (LAS) Placement test for Grades 2-5 (screening for reading, writing, listening and speaking) is also available for ESL students.

Placement in ESL is based on students' language background, oral and written skills, length of time in English language schooling and learning profile. Decisions about exiting the ESL programme are taken jointly by the ESL and class teacher. Students leaving ESL should be able to function competently in class and be able to continue their English language development within the homeroom environment.

New students with English as a second language who do not require ESL instruction, as well as students who have exited the LIS ESL programme, are monitored to ensure they are keeping pace with the language and literacy skills of the year level. Activities such as writing club may be available to these students.

Secondary

Beginner and low intermediate ESL students in Grades 6 and 7 receive 6 periods of ESL instruction, scheduled back-to-back with mainstream English. There is usually one ESL class in each grade level and class sizes are kept to a maximum of 10 for optimal learning. An additional 2 periods a week of ESL is also sometimes available for beginning students to work on their oral skills. ESL in Grade 8 consists of 4 periods a week, scheduled back-to-back with French, for the school year 2009-2010. After that year, Grade 8 ESL students will receive 6 periods a week, scheduled against English (as in Grades 6 and 7).

Since Grade 6 is the beginning of Secondary school, all students at this year level are given a writing prompt and are informally assessed by the ESL department at the start of the year. The ESL teacher assesses grade 7 and Grade 8 ESL students, as well as all new students entering LIS in Grades 6 to 8, during the ESL class with the Oxford Quick Placement Test (QPT) or a similar instrument. Other testing incorporates; screening for reading, writing, listening and speaking, writing samples; and teacher observation and feedback.

The ESL classes in Grades 6 to 8 focus on oral skills, including presentation skills; vocabulary development; writing skills, particularly using a genre-based approach; reading comprehension and literature study; and discrete language work as needed. While developing English language proficiency, secondary ESL classes use a content-based approach where possible, focusing on topics or themes taught in Social Studies, Science and other subjects to contextualise the language being taught.

All Secondary ESL students will ultimately take German and French, in addition to ESL.

ESL students are constantly monitored for proficiency. The ESL teacher, in cooperation with the homeroom tutor and subject teachers, can move students into the mainstream English class when the student is deemed ready. Such movement would take place at an agreed-on time between the ESL and English teacher (normally after the October break, Christmas break, February break and after Easter break). Students are then monitored to ensure they

are succeeding within the mainstream English classroom. Parents will be informed of any change.

Host country (German)

The German host country language programme is taught from Pre-school 3 to Grade 12. It includes both German as a Second Language (GSL) and German for native speakers. It is taught by German native language teachers in grade level groups. GSL students who have achieved sufficient proficiency, judged by the GSL teacher and the German department, may be moved into the German for native speakers group.

Pre-school

Whilst pre-school children receive no formal instruction in German, native speakers are encouraged to build on their knowledge of German and use it to help them develop language skills in English.

Primary

Children in Reception classes receive 2 periods of German per week. Native and non-native speakers are taught together with a hands on approach emphasising on speaking and listening activities.

From Grades 1 to 5, German is offered 5 times a week. Native and fluent non-native German speakers are taught together. Lessons focus on developing all skill areas, and use both the local (Saxon) curriculum and whole-school language and literacy approaches to lesson structure and topics. Beginners and intermediates attend GSL 5 times a week. Lessons focus on building a working vocabulary of German and understanding the conventions of the language.

Secondary German

GSL students in the secondary school are taught in grade levels and receive lessons based on their proficiency level. Lessons focus on developing oral and written skills in the host country language, and to develop and knowledge and appreciation of German-speaking culture.

German for native speakers in Grades 6 to 8 focuses on increasing students' reading and writing skills, as well as their academic oral language skills. Lessons include language and literature work, as well as several projects designed to explore the German language with respect to dialect and language change. IGCSE German is offered in Grades 9 and 10; Grades 11 and 12 offer German A1 and German B.

For further information on the German language programme, please see the LIS website.

Other languages (French)

French as a foreign language is part of the curriculum for all students in Grade 6 to 8, and is also available in Grades 9 to 12. French for mother tongue speakers are also available in Grades 9 and 10 by special arrangements with the parents, who are responsible for payment.

Mother Tongue

Rationale

The role of ongoing mother tongue development in student learning is firmly established. Students who see their first language skills acknowledged by teachers and parents are able to view English as an addition to their first language, rather than as a substitution for it. They are more likely to feel confident, and to take the risks involved in learning a new language. Furthermore, research clearly shows that language skills can transfer from one language to another, and that students with developed literacy skills in their mother tongue tend to be more successful in learning a second language. Therefore, LIS encourages families to develop and maintain mother tongue literacy skills for all students.

German Mother Tongue

As noted above, German mother tongue instruction is offered to students from Pre-school 3 through to Grade 12. Additionally, each Pre-school classroom has at least one bilingual native German speaker who can support children's oral German development while fostering English language acquisition, as well. As the majority of LIS students are German mother tongue speakers, this instruction supports the mother tongue learning for most of our students. Additionally, LIS actively informs parents of ways to build up mother tongue literacy skills at home, through parent evenings, handouts and regular contact with the German department.

Self Taught IB A1

LIS supports the provision of IB A1 Standard Level self-taught for Mother Tongue languages other than English and German. LIS has appointed a dedicated ESL and Mother Tongue Coordinator to oversee this effort and to undertake additional mother tongue initiatives for LIS students and their families.

Other Mother Tongue

However, not all LIS students have German or English as a home language. For these students, parents play a crucial role in helping develop and maintain oral and literate mother tongue skills in their children. To support mother tongue development, LIS:

- informs parents of the reason for maintaining a strong mother tongue, and of specific ways to do this. We disseminate this information through the school website, parent evenings and special presentations, school publications such as *The Observer*, and via postings and handouts for the parent community;

- welcomes parent volunteers of different mother tongues to classrooms to read to students in the home language during school time;
- offers Grade 11 Community, Action and Service (CAS) students the possibility of working with younger learners in mother tongue development;
- provides facilities for and encourages after-school mother tongue teaching, as arranged by the parents. Mother tongue teaching after school has included French, Mandarin and Spanish;
- maintains contact information for local and state education authorities with respect to state-supported mother tongue teaching and provides facilities for this teaching (Portuguese)
- houses and continues to add to mother tongue literature in the library (current sections include German, French, and Dutch mother tongue books, with newly created sections for Hebrew and Spanish). Parents are encouraged to bring back mother tongue children’s literature when they return to their home countries or when they travel.

Admissions

The complex topic of admissions includes gathering information on the language background and proficiencies of prospective students. Language-related admissions requirements and procedures are detailed here. Further information on admissions policies and procedures not directly concerning language issues is available separately.

All Applicants

Applicants and their families are asked to provide information on the student’s home language(s) and previous language learning experiences. This information is collected on the LIS application form, and shared with the relevant principal and teachers. This information will be included in the school’s information management system (Centre).

The ESL specialists screen applicants’ English proficiency in order to advise the Management Team about admissions decisions and, if a student is admitted, for placement in the appropriate ESL class. The Management Team retains ultimate responsibility for admissions decisions. In some cases, places may be offered conditionally as additional intensive English tuition may be required to reach a certain proficiency level before commencement of studies at LIS .

Pre-school and Primary Admissions and Procedures

There is no English language admissions requirement for Pre-school or Primary students.

In the Primary school, all newly accepted non-native English speaking students are seen by the ESL specialist either during a school visit (prior to the first day of school) or, if this is not possible, during the child’s first week of school (generally during the grade-level’s ESL block,

although separate times can also be scheduled). The ESL specialist assesses the child's oral proficiency, gathers a writing sample (if possible) and then places the student in the appropriate ESL class in cooperation with the child's homeroom teacher. Pre-school students are informally assessed by the class teacher; consultation with the ESL specialist for any questions or follow-up is also possible.

Secondary Admissions and Procedures

The following admissions requirements are in place for students in Secondary:

- **Grade 6:** either an A2 level or a gymnasium '1' or equivalent in English on the most recent report
- **Grade 7:** an A2+ and a high English grade on the most recent report
- **Grade 8:** an A2+ level and high English grade on most recent report when admitted at the start of the school year. Mid-year admissions into Grade 8 should meet Grade 9 requirements
- **Grades 9-10:** B1 proficiency, proven academic record and high English grade on the most recent report
- **Grade 11:** B2 or above, proven academic record and high English grade on most recent report.

(see appendix for an explanation of these proficiency levels)

International students with no German schooling alternative may be admitted without meeting these requirements. In that case, families are urged to engage in extra English tuition and advised of the difficulty of completing schoolwork without sufficient English proficiency. Admission may also be predicated on the student undergoing language training and reaching the required level prior to beginning school at LIS.

Screening Instruments

Secondary applicants are screened for English proficiency by an ESL specialist with formal diagnostic testing tools.

The ESL specialist also gathers information about the student's previous language experiences.

During the summer months, if an ESL specialist is not available, the school admissions officer is responsible for administering the Oxford QPT Version 1 or 2, and obtaining a writing sample. The ESL department follows up as soon as possible to complete the proficiency screening and share the assessment results with the principal, teachers and admissions staff.

The results of the English proficiency screening are shared with the principal, teachers, and admissions staff so that fully informed admissions decisions can be made.

Roles & Responsibilities

Language is fundamental to learning, and all teachers are involved in the language teaching process. This means that teachers work toward improving students' language proficiency within the context of teaching the content, concepts and skills of their subjects. This work is done within subject teams, and collaboratively with the ESL, German, and other departments where appropriate.

Mainstream/Subject teacher roles and responsibilities:

- take responsibility for students' overall development in the content area
- work collaboratively with ESL, German and own department colleagues to:
 - identify language issues
 - reflect on own teaching
 - discuss language teaching approaches / strategies
 - experiment with ESL strategies and language scaffolding in own classroom, and evaluate/report on their effectiveness
 - identify topics / language that can be taught across the curriculum where appropriate
- identify language demands of content area/grade level/subject
- adjust unit plans to include relevant language focus or teaching points to help students succeed in the subject
- explain, model and provide opportunities for students to learn and practice the language needed for the subject area
- contribute to development of additional language support materials to meet unit aims
- work with ESL, German and other colleagues to report student outcomes and next steps to parents
- take advantage of professional development opportunities to improve teaching and learning in the classroom.
- Flag up students whose educational needs may go beyond language acquisition and refer them to the student support team (SST)

ESL teacher roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the ESL teacher are outlined in the LIS ESL Handbook. In addition to an ESL teacher's normal teaching duties, an ESL teacher is expected to:

- establish and nurture collaboration with all teachers, particularly mainstream/subject and German teachers
- negotiate a flexible, regular teaching role with colleagues (in-class, withdrawal, co-teaching)
- assist mainstream/subject teachers in:
 - analysing and identifying the language demands of content/subject area teaching

- developing a language focus that complements units of study
- assessing the language development of second language learners
- collaborating on reporting/feedback to parents
- developing language-focused materials for use in the mainstream/content class
- provide in-service training by sharing strategies, teaching suggestions and materials for second language learners
- assess the language proficiency of new applicants in order to inform the admissions process (secondary); assess the language proficiency of incoming students in order to support teachers, administrators and parents (pre-school and primary)
- maintain and update ESL resources and keep current with latest research on second language teaching and learning
- provide suggestions to the library for ESL-relevant purchases (either professional development or student-targeted materials).

Management Team roles/responsibilities

Effective implementation of the language policy depends upon the support of the school Management Team. These administrators have a critical role to play in ensuring the *conditions* and supplying the *resources* that allow for effective collaboration, teaching, reflection and professional development. These conditions and resources include time, materials, training and leadership. The Management Team is expected to:

- provide funding, oversight, leadership and resources for successful implementation of the language policy. This should include:
 - providing a variety of professional development opportunities to improve teaching of multilingual students
 - promoting an embedded professional development model, such as the TESMC course, that enables collaboration concerning curriculum, instructional techniques, assessment and student progress
 - providing structured opportunities for mainstream and language teachers to collaborate on the above-mentioned issues
 - regularly reviewing language policies and practices
- Ensure that admissions procedures are transparent, consistent with the school's language policy and regularly reviewed
- Facilitate communication with parents:
 - promote clear and transparent communication about student language development
 - provide German courses for staff
 - facilitate English courses for parents.
 - support teachers in the delivery of instruction
 - share responsibility for oversight, implementation and revision of language policy.

Admissions staff

In addition to the normal duties of the admissions officer, the admissions department should:

- Ensure that the application form has been filled out fully and correctly, including information about applicants' language profile (parents' first languages; other languages spoken in the home; previous languages of instruction), to be shared with the school principal and ESL department
- notify the ESL department about arrival of non native English students for trail days and late entrants
- inform parents that acceptance to LIS may be subject to ESL assessment results.
- relay to parents the most updated information about school language teaching programmes and policies, and refer relevant questions to section principals or the ESL department.

Next Steps

LIS is in constant process of developing its language teaching and learning programmes.

Plans for future steps include:

- further development of the A1 self-taught mother tongue programme,
- additional resources and curriculum development for the ESL programme,
- increased collaboration between language and subject/class teachers to support language learning,
- increasing information sharing with parents about ways to foster mother tongue and second language development.
- Increase provision for extra curricular mother tongue tuition
- Increase foreign language teaching possibilities as part of the curriculum.

Appendix: Common European Framework of Reference

Level Description

A1 Basic user

Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

A2 Basic user

Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

B1 Independent user

Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

B2 Independent user

can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

C1 Proficient user

Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

C2 Proficient user

Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in the most complex situations.

For more information about the Council of Europe and Common Reference levels, go to <http://culture.coe.int/portfolio>