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LANGUAGE POLICY

Introduction

The International Baccalaureate (IB) World Schools are required to adopt a written language policy.

Philosophy and Aims

Language is the primary means of communication and foundation for all learning. Language enables students to become inquirers, as well as develop critical thinking and their social skills. Furthermore, language proficiency enables students to acquire knowledge related to all areas of the IB Middle Years and Diploma Programme curricular framework. Through language acquisition students enhance not only the knowledge of their own language and culture but of other languages and cultures studied, thus enriching their international mindedness.

Language acquisition is a life long process.

School language profile

English and Croatian are languages of teaching and learning in the IB department, as well as languages of communication used in and outside of the classroom. Both British English and American English, in written and spoken form, are equally acceptable as long as used uniform. Teachers of other subject groups use English as language of instruction and are responsible for introducing, developing and reinforcing specific, subject related register.

IB language philosophy of placing a high value to mother tongue learning is highly appreciated and followed in our school. It is also the basis for the language provision for both literature and language acquisition.

The following language options are offered in school:

Language and literature- both Croatian and English courses taught in student`s mother tongue or student`s best language; compulsory in all 4 years of the program;

Language acquisition course- English, French, German and Croatian, taken at various levels depending on the previous knowledge of the language, compulsory course in the MYP, optional in the DP.

The Middle Years Programme (MYP4 and MYP5) at our school offers English as the language of instruction.

In order to enrol to the MYP students take an English entrance exam, unless they are native speakers or have been educated in English for at least two years. Depending on the level of their English knowledge, the results on the entrance exam/placement test as well as their previous schooling, all our students take either Language and Literature- English, or Language Acquisition- English, Phase V in MYP4 and Phase VI in MYP5.

In accordance with national educational regulations on mother language learning regulated by the Ministry of Education, all Croatian citizens are obliged to study Croatian as their mother tongue i.e. Language and Literature (former Language A) .

In addition to English and Croatian all of MYP students also choose a language B - French or German – either at the beginners level (Phase 1) or standard level (Phase 3 and 4) depending on their previous learning experience.

Depending on the number of interested students, Latin is also offered as an optional subject and is taught in Croatian two periods a week. It follows the curriculum similar to that taught in Croatian schools. Namely, the students who want to study medicine, pharmacy or so are required certain level of Latin.

In MYP4 students have 4 periods of English Language and literature as well as English Language acquisition, and in MYP5 5 periods, whereas in MYP4 they have 5 Croatian Language and literature classes and 4 in MYP5.

All other language acquisition classes have three periods a week both in MYP4 and MYP5.

English language policy

English, being the language of instruction in the MYP as well as DP, is offered as one of the two Language and Literature courses. Since there is a variety of students arriving from different parts of the world, as well as Croatian students who all have different English language backgrounds, the school also offers English Language acquisition at a very high level of proficiency (Phase 5 in MYP4 and Phase 6 in MYP5).

Many students who follow English Language and Literature in MYP5 also choose the Language and Literature course in the DP.

The English Language Acquisition students normally choose English at high level as Language Acquisition course in the DP.

English A (Language and literature) is primarily focused on literature and involves different aspects of communication – oral, written and visual thus developing such skills.

English A course encompasses class discussions, oral presentations, speeches, dramatic and oral interpretations; written communication involves both reading both literary and non-literary texts, and writing, allowing students to develop, organize and communicate ideas and information producing various types of texts such as essays, creative writing pieces, leaflets, interviews, advertisements, etc.

The third type of communication encompasses all aspects of viewing and presenting involving PowerPoint Presentations, advertisements, commercials, video clips, films, posters and TV programmes – viewing and interpreting.

In **English B**, classes are taught 4 times a week in MYP4 and five times a week in MYP5. All students at our school are quite advanced at that stage already, so in MYP 4 we are at Phase 5 and in MYP5 at Phase 6. By the end of each phase students will have acquired a high language proficiency, and they will have also learnt how to analyse information and main ideas from various sources. The material used varies. Students will read one literary work of art per unit, will cover various related texts from the textbook of teacher's choice, and will review grammar and vocabulary. All these skills should enable them to have a smooth transition into the DP program.

Croatian language policy

All Croatian students and citizens have to take Croatian Language and Literature course as it is regulated by the national educational regulations on mother language policy, a requirement of the Ministry of education, especially if the students decide to study in Croatia, as all universities and colleges in Croatia require from students Croatian language 'matura' exam at either high or sometimes standard level. Because of the regulations and requirements of the Ministry of education the Croatian syllabus in part has to follow Croatian syllabus from the national curriculum but in terms of philosophy and especially assessment criteria it also follows IB MYP principles and practices.

However, there is usually a small group of Croatian students who were either born or have spent most of their lives in an English speaking environment, and whose Croatian is not very good to easily follow Croatian as language A, therefore the school provides additional classes of Croatian for such

students to prepare them better for the demands of Language and Literature- Croatian, both in MYP and DP programmes.

Finally, since the host country's language is Croatian the school believes that the foreign students should learn the language of the host country as it makes their lives outside the school community much more comfortable and everyday communication with Croatian citizens a lot easier, if they have at least a basic knowledge of Croatian. In addition to all the above mentioned, all of the MYP teachers are Croatian so our students can also benefit from them as far as Croatian is concerned.

Language acquisition (former Languages B) German, French

At our school we offer Croatian, French and German as Languages B in addition to English B. Students are usually organized in small groups (app. 10-15 students) which provide an excellent environment when it comes to learning a language B. Students are encouraged to raise their awareness about the advantages of such an environment, as well as to apply the skills and knowledge of the culture they come from.

Since this school is also a state school, and thus mainly funded by the Ministry of Education, due to the recession and budget cuts the school cannot organize very small groups for Languages B.

Language B courses are organised in a way that aims at developing all four skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking), and thus prepare students for the final assessment based on the assessment criteria provided by the IB. Various teaching strategies are applied and students are involved as much as possible in the process of self-assessment.

Due to the fact that students come from different educational systems, it may happen that a mixed ability group is formed, so that some extra time has to be devoted to practising grammar/vocabulary in order to create a more homogenous group, and therefore, more efficient in its progress.

Teaching is organised in three periods weekly (135 minutes) divided into one double lesson (90 minutes) + one single lesson per week – this enables the teacher to organise lessons efficiently. It is suitable for larger units, leaves enough time to discuss homework in the classroom, do enough grammar/vocabulary exercises, do pair or group work, make presentations of either personal or group projects, do listening or writing tasks etc.

All students have access to the Internet at school and during Language B lessons they work with the materials prepared by a teacher, but are also encouraged to use their own time for the purposes of foreign language acquisition. They also use relevant literature which is at their disposal at the school library. Visits to local Goethe Institute and French Library are sometimes organised.

Support for mother tongues

As the international student body in our school is quite small, and most students in the programme are Croatian or Croatian citizens, in the MYP the school has support only for Croatian as all other students in that case follow English Language and literature. However, in the DP the school tries to support as many mother tongues as possible which is sometimes quite difficult due to the lack of qualified teachers to teach the mother tongue programme.

Strategies to support all teachers in their contribution to the language development of students

Most of the teachers who work in the International Department of the school – either MYP or DP have a very high level of English. However, occasionally refreshment courses are organized in Croatia or the teachers can opt for a 2 or 3-week language course in UK.

Support for students who are not proficient in the language of instruction (ESL)

As the majority of our students have a very high level of English there is usually no need for the ESL support. But in the past when the school deemed it necessary and ESL course was organized for students with lower level of English. Should there be such a need in the future, the school has resources to organize that as an additional ESL class just like it provides additional Croatian classes for a number of Croatian students who have problems with Croatian and the school provides

additional classes of Croatian to prepare them better for the demands of Language and Literature-Croatian, both in MYP and DP programmes.