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# The International School of Belgrade

## Language Policy and Practices

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### Glossary

ISB- International School of Belgrade

EAL-English as an Additional Language

IB - International Baccalaureate

PYP-Primary Years Programme

MYP-Middle Years Programme

DP-Diploma Programme

## **Language Policy – A Conceptual Framework of Language and Learning**

Language learning in school is crucial for academic cognitive growth and the construction of knowledge. All students move along a continuum of language and learning and some of the complexity of the relationship between language and learning is expressed by Halliday (1985) “learning language, learning through language and learning about language,” where all three aspects operate at any one time.

### **Learning Language**

A child starts to communicate in the early stages of life and learns to use language in order to construct meaning and to interact. In addition to building up a resource for meaning, the child develops basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) – the dimension of language that will enable them to interact socially. Students who have communicative skills in a mother tongue may become functional in another language within two years.

### **Learning through Language (CALP)**

The development of academic language skills required for discourse in abstract and decontextualized settings in later schooling is referred to as CALP – cognitive academic language proficiency. To be successful in school, students must have an understanding and ability to use a variety of discourses and texts across the many subjects they study. All teachers are responsible for the development of their students’ CALP abilities in the discourses or discipline that they teach – it is in this sense that all teachers are language teachers.

### **Learning about Language**

Understanding the relationship of language and meaning and how language works in the construction of knowledge empowers the language user. Having critical language awareness will enable the student to make choices about language use according to his or her purpose and audience and also to gain insight into the language choices of others. Learners who are using a language other than their mother tongue might not always have this awareness and for this reason learning about language needs to be explicitly taught.

## **ISB Philosophy**

### **The role of language**

At ISB, we believe that language is integral to exploring (promoting/pursuing/discovering) and sustaining our social and personal development, as well as our identity, and is the foundation for all learning. Language also plays a vital role in the construction of meaning. It empowers the learner and provides an intellectual framework to support conceptual development and critical thinking.

We endeavour to develop a lifelong passion for the learning of languages and a love of literature. As such, ISB values and promotes intercultural understanding, multilingualism, international mindedness and mother tongue development.

### **Intercultural understanding**

We nurture and celebrate the cultural and linguistic diversity in our community. All languages are celebrated in our public spaces as we recognise the social importance, educational value and comfort of people speaking the language of their choice.

### **Multilingualism**

Multilingualism is viewed as “An individual store of languages at any level of proficiency including partial competence and incomplete fluency as well as metalinguistic awareness, learning strategies and opinions, preferences and passive or active knowledge of languages, language use and language learning” In IB programmes, multilingualism is viewed as a fact, a right and a resource. (Language and Learning in IB programmes 2012)

### **International mindedness**

Language provides a vehicle for learners to engage with the world, relate to, and accept, responsibility for the

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mission of the IB to “Help to create a better and more peaceful world.” This is expressed through the IB Learner Profile in being a caring, open-minded and principled communicator (Language and Learning in IB programmes 2012). Exposure to and experience with languages, with all their richness and diversity, creates an inquisitiveness about life and learning, and a confidence about creating new social interactions.

### **Mother tongue development**

Mother tongue development is significant for all learners. It is acknowledged that the development of a person’s mother tongue is crucial for cognitive development, and in maintaining cultural and linguistic identity. Success in mother tongue development is a strong predictor of long-term academic achievement, including the acquisition of other languages. In accordance with the IB philosophy, students who have a strong base in one language are better able to transfer skills and concepts, and learn another language. Having a strong foundation in their home language while studying in another enables students to reach academic success and enjoy a greater feeling of self-worth and cultural identity.

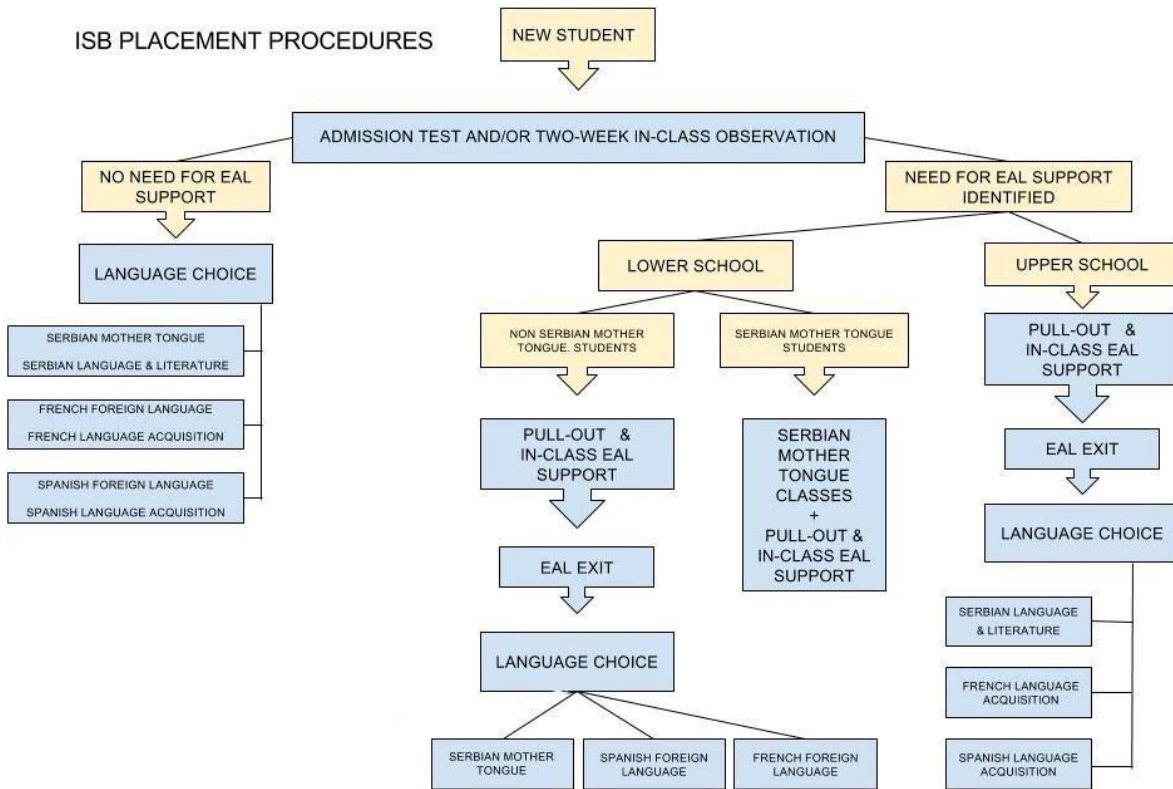
ISB also recognizes that in some cases students’ best academic language is English due to their schooling at international schools. ISB recognizes that each child’s linguistic and cultural ‘make-up’ is unique and must be respected and supported in every way.

### **Practices in all Programmes**

All teachers are language teachers, who highlight the role of language across the domains as transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary within disciplines. Language acquisition is supported by a language rich environment which embraces the diversity of languages, cultures and perspectives in all learning spaces. In our public spaces there is an array of different languages in our group interactions. We are respectful about the way in which we use and interact with language. Teachers model language usage and attitudes to language and literature in all our learning spaces. The practice of translating information and communicating ideas and understandings in other languages is used in order to support our learners.

We believe that the following essential dimensions of good teaching practice can promote the full development of language learning for all members of our learning community regardless of language background: to **affirm** identity; to **activate** prior understanding and **build** background knowledge; to **scaffold** learning and to **extend** language and learning.

## Placement Procedures in all Programmes



## Primary Years Programme (PYP) Courses

Language is the major connecting element across the curriculum. The focus is on how language is used across subject areas and throughout the transdisciplinary programme of inquiry. In an inquiry-based classroom, language instruction is integrated into all learning activities. Teachers strive to develop a caring language community in which all students feel accepted and confident in taking risks in their language learning. (Adapted from *Making the PYP Happen: A curriculum framework for international primary education* p69)

### Courses offered:

#### Language A

- English
- Serbian Mother Tongue
- Other Mother Tongue Languages (After School Program)

#### Foreign Language

- EAL
- French
- Spanish

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## English and EAL

### Curriculum:

ISB recognizes that developing basic interpersonal communication skills can take up to two years, while the more demanding cognitive academic language proficiency, the level of English language competence required to have adequate access in the mainstream curriculum, can take much longer to fully develop. For this reason, ISB considers EAL to be a long-term commitment.

### Practices:

- Students who are new to English will enter the EAL program and instruction will be focused on acquiring social language skills.
- Students who have had some exposure to English are observed by the EAL and homeroom teachers over a two-week period in order to assess their ability to study in English and determine their placement in the EAL program. The process consists of an oral interview and reading and writing tasks that are conducted informally.
- Gradually EAL Instruction moves from a focus on social to academic English and the skills needed to be successful in the content areas.
- Specialized instruction enables the full range of learners from non-English speaking backgrounds (from beginners to high intermediate) to receive English language instruction and support either in small groups or as individual instruction.
- EAL language support takes place both as in-class support and as pull-out instruction (in the EAL classroom as needed).
- Students attend EAL as their foreign language class.
- In their homeroom classrooms, EAL students follow the same curriculum as their peers
- The EAL specialist teachers plan with the grade level teams and assist EAL students with mainstream content as well as general language acquisition.

### Students exit the program based on the following criteria:

- Mainstream classroom performance (including teacher evidence of student oral, reading and written performance)
- EAL assessment
- Teacher recommendations
- Social-cultural adjustment

EAL teachers, together with classroom teachers and the administration, determine when an EAL student is ready to start a foreign language.

## Serbian Mother Tongue

### Curriculum:

The ISB Serbian Mother Tongue Program enables Serbian students to increase their fluency and to study Serbian literature and culture. In addition to developing language and literature concepts and skills, drawn from the Serbian National Curriculum, students are also provided with insights into the historical and cultural background of Serbia.

**Practices:**

- The PYP Serbian Mother Tongue Program is a requirement for all students whose family/ mother tongue language is Serbian. New students to grade 5, with little or no English and a strong foundation in Serbian mother tongue may be pulled out of the Serbian Mother Tongue Program and placed in the EAL program for the duration of up to one school year.
- Serbian mother tongue students attend Serbian language lessons instead of taking a foreign language.
- Push-in or pull-out support is provided to students in need of further English language development.
- Upon enrolment students go through a two-week observation period by their Serbian language teacher to determine placement in either the mother tongue Serbian program or the Serbian Foreign Language Program.

## Other Mother Tongues

**Curriculum:**

The Mother Tongue Program is offered after school to families with children who do not speak English or Serbian as their mother tongue. The curriculum is developed by the teacher according to the needs of the family. The purpose of the program is to help children maintain the languages spoken at home which are not offered within the school day.

**Practices:**

- Mother Tongue teachers work privately at ISB. The school provides organizational back-up, allocates classrooms, holds meetings and social get-togethers, and helps to manage situations that may arise.
- Information about the program is sent home to parents at the start of the school year, and groups are formed according to students' interest and teacher availability.
- Lessons are scheduled on Mondays after school. No other after-school activities are held at this time.

## Foreign Language Acquisition

**Curriculum:**

Foreign Language acquisition at ISB is designed for students who would like to enhance their understanding of a target culture and its people through language and, as such, aims to develop children's fundamental language skills and enable them to understand and communicate in the target language.

Instruction addresses the language learning outcomes of the Lower School Language B Scope and Sequence and framed around units in the Programme of Inquiry.

From grades 1 to 5, students proficient in English can choose one of the following foreign languages: French or Spanish.

Serbian as a foreign language is offered on Monday after school.

**Practices**

- Language teaching follows the pedagogy of the PYP in that learning engagements are inquiry based and student input is included in the development of both learning engagements and assessment tasks.

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- The instruction occurs in the target language as much as possible, but students get help in English when necessary.
- Differing levels of acquisition in one group are commonplace, so teachers differentiate instruction to address the needs of individual students and allow construction of understanding at an appropriate pace.
- Students are provided with opportunities to practice and master the following language skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and presenting. They are also given opportunities to explore language in the cultural context.
- Students are expected to continue learning their chosen language throughout their stay at ISB lower school.

## Middle Year Programme (MYP) Courses

Learning to communicate in a variety of ways in more than one language is fundamental to the development of intercultural understanding in the IB. The MYP curriculum supports complex, rich, dynamic learning across a range of language domains.

### Courses offered:

#### Language and Literature

English  
Serbian

#### Language Acquisition

EAL  
French  
Spanish

#### Enrichment and Electives

French  
German  
Spanish

Students whose French, German or Spanish language acquisition is not at the required phase for their grade will be placed in the enrichment or elective language class to further support their language acquisition. Students are able to exit once they achieve the required phase.

## English Language and Literature

### Curriculum:

The curriculum of English language and literature is designed to engage students in the study of many aspects of English language and literature. Students explore a collection of texts that span both place and time, written by authors from around the world, in both historical and modern contexts. They study various genres of literary and non-literary texts, including poetry, novels, plays, and documentaries, and develop their oral and written communication skills.

### Practices:

- All students need to be enrolled in English Language and Literature throughout the MYP.

## Serbian Language and Literature

### Curriculum:

The curriculum of the Serbian language and literature course is designed to engage students in the study of many aspects of Serbian language and literature. This is done through the study of Serbian and world authors, with a specific insight into and focus on Serbian culture and history. Students study a wide range of literary and non-literary text types, writing styles and techniques, as well as learning grammar and punctuation rules. This approach allows students to comment on the significance of any possible contexts, audiences, purpose, and the use of linguistic and literary devices.

### Practices:

- Students whose mother tongue is Serbian are expected to study Serbian language and literature.
- Students who are not yet sufficiently proficient in English take EAL instead of Serbian language and literature. Once they reach phase 5 in English, they will exit EAL and join the Serbian language and literature class.

## Language Acquisition

### Curriculum:

ISB offers two foreign languages in the language acquisition program: French and Spanish. The curriculum of Language acquisition classes provides students with the opportunity to develop insights into the features, processes and craft of language and the concept of culture, and to realize that there are diverse ways of living, viewing and behaving in the world. The curriculum is designed to support the development of the students' academic communication in the language of their choice. This is done through various concept-based learning engagements that allow students to develop, practice, and apply strategies for reading, writing, listening and oral communication.

### Practices:

- MYP students are enrolled in a language acquisition course once they reach phase 5 in English.
- Students are expected to study the same additional language in each year of the MYP, or achieve a satisfactory proficiency in phase 4 in order to transfer to another language.

## English as an Additional Language (EAL)

### Curriculum:

The curriculum for EAL language acquisition classes provides students with the opportunity to develop insights into the features, processes and craft of language and the concept of culture, and to realize that there are diverse ways of living, viewing and behaving in the world. The curriculum is designed to support the development of the students' academic communication in English. This is done through various concept-based learning engagements that allow students to develop, practice, and apply strategies for reading, writing, listening and oral communication.

EAL follows the MYP aims and objectives and specific learning needs of the students in order to support the student's mainstream classes. The focus of the course is to develop and improve the students' English language skills to ensure the necessary academic language for success in the mainstream courses.



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## Practices:

- An English language entrance exam is administered upon a student's entrance into ISB to determine their phase.
- Students in phases 1 through 4 of English language acquisition are placed in an EAL course in addition to their English Language and Literature course.
- EAL students in phases 1 and 2 are assessed according to language acquisition criteria and receive a NG (no grade) in Language and Literature reports.
- EAL students in phases 3 and 4 are assessed according to the Language and Literature criteria and receive NG (no grade) in Language Acquisition criteria.
- Feedback from mainstream teachers and quarterly reviews will determine when an EAL student is ready to follow another language and mainstream courses without EAL support.

## Diploma Programme (DP) Courses

### Curriculum:

The curriculum framework for language courses is devised by the IB and follows its curriculum review cycle. Using the IB framework from the current IB guides, ISB teachers develop a detailed two-year program that will enable students to be successful in the course and its final IB exams.

### Practices:

- Students choose their Diploma Group 1 and 2 languages, towards the end of the MYP course (grade 10)
- All ISB students have to have English as either Group 1 or Group 2 language.
- Student's Group 1 language is either their Mother Tongue, or their best language
- If students choose two languages from Group 1, they do not need to choose a Group 2 language (for ex. English Language and Literature and Serbian Literature, or Korean School Supported Self-Taught Literature and English Language and Literature)
- Language teachers use diagnostic tests developed by the school beside other assessment tools, to decide the best placement for the student in the Diploma program.
- English B is only offered at a Higher Level
- Group 2 foreign language choice depends on student's previous exposure
- ISB also offers IB languages online
- DP (Language acquisition) B level (Standard and Higher Level)

Students are eligible if they have previously studied the language for at least two consecutive years for the Standard Level course, and four or more years for the Higher Level course.

- DP languages *ab initio*

Students are eligible only if they have no or limited exposure to the language (up to one school year).

### Courses Offered:

#### Group 1 - Language and Literature and Literature

English A Language & Literature (SL/HL)

Serbian A Literature (SL/HL)

School Supported Self-Taught Literature (SSST) (SL)

### **Group 2 - Language acquisition**

English (HL)  
French (SL/HL)  
German ab initio (SL)  
Spanish (SL)  
Spanish ab initio – online (SL)

## **Language & Literature or Literature**

A student's Group 1 course will either be a Language and Literature or Literature course.

ISB practices in language courses aim to develop a student's powers of expression, encourage appreciation of the formal, stylistic and aesthetic qualities of texts, introduce students to a range of texts from different periods, styles and genres, encourage through the study of texts an appreciation of the different perspectives of people from other cultures, and promote in students an enjoyment of, and lifelong interest in, language and literature.

ISB offers English Language and Literature only, as this course better suits the needs of our students, and especially since many also take Serbian Literature or another mother tongue via the School Supported Self-Taught course.

ISB encourages and provides all students with the opportunity to maintain and further develop their mother tongue in the DP programme. Some of the School Supported Self-Taught languages studied in the DP have been Hebrew, Lithuanian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Polish, Hindi, Norwegian, Italian, French, Turkish, Russian.

## **Language Acquisition**

These language courses aim to accommodate different levels of linguistic proficiency that students may have at the start of the course. Overall, the aims of language acquisition are to develop students intercultural understanding, enable students to understand and use the language in a range of contexts and for a variety of purposes, develop students' awareness of the relationship between languages and cultures, and provide the opportunity for enjoyment, creativity and intellectual stimulation through knowledge of an additional language.

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