

Language Policy - IBDP

Language wraps itself around, in, through and between everything that we teachers and learners do in the classroom (Ritchhart, 2002, p. 141). The development of language comes from the instinctive need that we must communicate. Through the process of socialization, we shape our individual ways of talking, expressing and thinking. Social interactions and relationships together with the expectations from society help us develop a cultural identity. Language is vital in its role to shape our thinking and provides the intellectual framework to support conceptual development. Through language we also develop literacy and multiliteracies (IB 2011 p. 3). Literacy becomes important when more abstract learning takes place through dense academic text in school. The ability that the student has to access these texts is referred to as a cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) when this language is not the same as the mother tongue for students when they are learning and developing their CALP this has implications for school organization as well as classroom practice. (IB, 2008 p.5)

In case of the IB programmes, the role of language is valued as central to developing critical thinking, which is essential for the cultivation of intercultural awareness, international-mindedness and global citizenship (IB 2011, p.3). The pedagogical approach to language learning should always be open and inclusive. It should also promote critical thinking and affirm a learner's identity and autonomy. Language and power are linked together and as a result of recent years' globalization it has become imperative to learn critical approaches to language use as well as to create a critical language awareness in a world with high demands on intercultural awareness and international mindedness. (IB, 2011, p.4) Multilingualism is seen as a resource and an opportunity for the IB in engendering the ideals of international-mindedness and intercultural awareness. (IB, 2011 p 9)

Mora gymnasium is a Swedish upper secondary school located in the region of Dalecarlia. Our school has an international profile and our students ought to have the proficiency to communicate in, at a minimum, two languages after completing the IB Diploma programme. This is also one of the goals for The Council of Europe that aims to increase the number of plurilingual citizens and also The Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR), which has a project to improve citizens' awareness of the multilingual nature of Europe in order to create a positive attitude towards linguistic diversity and the learning of global languages (www.coe.int/lang; www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre_EN.asp). UNESCO also states that foreign language learning should be seen as a part of an intercultural education that aims to elevate the understanding between communities and nations. (IB, 2011) Sweden is a small country and therefore it is of utter importance to have good knowledge in at least one global language. In our international and multicultural society, language proficiency is necessary. The Swedish national curriculum for upper secondary school (GY11), emphasizes that every school has an obligation to ensure that students know how to use both spoken and written Swedish and English (Skolverket, 2011, p. 53-65; p.160-181).

Our language policy supports holistic education and furthermore enhances intercultural understanding with reflective and open-minded students as a result, attuning to the IB Learner Profile which states that students shall develop to become global citizens through language:

We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. (<https://www.ibo.org/contentassets/fd82f70643ef4086b7d3f292cc214962/learner-profile-en.pdf>)

In the present global society, we need language to make things understandable, to reflect and to comprehend the world on an individual level and for collaborating with others. Good language skills are thus necessary for cognitive development and mental awareness. In order to engage with and share information and to develop critical thinking for the lifelong learning of our students, the language is crucial. All teachers are considered language teachers in this context. Language is considered to be a medium for learning across the whole curriculum. It is not the sole responsibility of the language teacher instead it should be integrated in all learning. Therefore, all teachers are responsible for the language development of their students. Students need to learn how to use language to name, describe, compare, record, analyze, evaluate and theorize as well as acquiring new vocabulary. Teachers should help student extend their language by giving them numerous opportunities for learner-centered practice and interactions with cognitively rich materials and experiences (IB 2011, p.9; 14; 25; 30). English is the presumed language of instruction for all subjects for students studying on the IBDP as well as in the pre-IB year. Note that the IBDP recognize that students may have a disadvantage when it comes to examinations because they are second language speakers. English is however the response and target language in all examinations except of the language courses. English must be used for all components of a subject. (IB, 2021a, General regulations article 9)

Considerable extra care has to be taken in the wording of questions so as not to disadvantage second-language speakers. Sentences should be short, with simple wording and sentence structure used wherever possible. However, subject-specific terminology should not be avoided. Additionally, tolerance must be shown towards errors in spelling and grammar when marking is carried out, except in languages examinations. As long as the meaning and communication are clear, no penalty should be applied and full marks should be available (IB, 2004, p. 16).

Constant professional development in English must be provided for our teachers. Through collaborative planning and reflection, the teachers are responsible for language development of students. However, the school stresses the importance of the usage of mother tongue (Swedish) when it comes to students in need of individual instructions, teachers working with special needs, guidance counsellors, health care and administrative staff when needed. The importance of Swedish as the host country language and as the mother tongue of a large number of the students is a significant factor in the overall character of the school. Swedish is taught to all students and is widely used in social situations.

Prior understanding and building background knowledge as well as scaffolding learning (for example carry out research) and affirming identity, three of the four dimensions of teaching, may acquire the students to use mother tongue as a base for further learning in order for new learning to occur (IB, 2011, p. 28-30). Research has shown that students who read

extensively both inside and outside the classroom will have far greater opportunities to extend their academic language and concepts. Reading and writing in a wide range of genres are important if the students are to develop cognitive academic language proficiency (IB, 2011, p. 30). Parents interested in their children's learning can help by giving them opportunities to extend reading at home in order to advance their language development. This is also something parents and the teachers at Mora gymnasium can collaborate and liaise with in order for students to excel in their language development. Parents will also be able to follow their children's progress through the school's learning platform and also by attending student-parent-teacher meetings each term at Mora gymnasium in which the students individual progress is to be discussed. Note that parents will be invited by the school until the day their child turns 18 then Mora gymnasium needs the student's permission in order to invite the parents.

Language courses on the IBDP are offered in two of the subject groups.

Language A – studies in language and literature and Language B- language acquisition. Language A is designed for students who have previous experience of using language of the course in academic context. This is also where the IB recognizes all students right to study in their mother tongue at the same level as other DP subjects. If a student has another mother tongue than the languages that are offered at Mora gymnasium at A-level (Swedish and English) the IB offers the services to students to take the course as a school supported self-taught course through the IB. Note that for students who want to apply to Swedish universities, there is a requirement to read Swedish as a HL course.

Language B – studies in language for students with some experience of the language. Mora gymnasium offers English B, German B and when possible, French and Spanish will be offered in cooperation with the courses of the current national programme. For students who do not have Swedish as their mother tongue we offer Swedish B, which meet the requirements of Sva2 for further studies at Swedish universities. As the host country language, Swedish language plays a prominent part in the school discourse and culture. Most students in the school speak Swedish to a certain extent. However, there are students who arrive to the Sweden and needs to learn Swedish. Extra support in the form of differentiation, scaffolding, and resources, is provided for those students for whom Swedish is an additional language.

Students are required to study:

- One language A and one language B subject or
- Two language A subjects

Note that the IB mandates that:

“the school recognizes multilingualism as a fact, a right and a resource for learning.” (IB, 2020 p 11)

During the pre-IB year in Mora gymnasium the student's language teachers together with the IBDP coordinator will individually evaluate every student's language skills together with the student before starting at the IBDP year 1. More can be read about this in the school's admission and assessment policies. This is part of the process to identify the student's individual language need and also as part of our system for keeping a language profile of each student.

Virtual resources - Mora gymnasium uses a variety of physical and virtual resources to facilitate language development (IB, 2020,). Below you can find some examples:

Immersive Reader – connected to many of Microsoft's Apps such as Teams, Word, OneNote etc. Facilitates language development by offering numerous ways to improve reading skills through read aloud function, grammar options, adjustable reading, grammar options, picture dictionary and more.

Reading Progress in Teams – a built in tool in Microsoft Teams which is designed to track reading fluency and support reading progress in students.

Dictation – offers students to use their voices to write in any of the Microsoft or Apple apps downloaded to the students' computers.

Read aloud function – Apple's built-in features, Microsofts built-in features and TorTalk, a read aloud program especially designed to facilitate reading in dyslexic students.

"e-språk" - a feature in NE (Nationalencyklopedin AB) that facilitates reading- and listening comprehension in English, Spanish, French, German and Swedish.

Britannica School – a feature in NE (Nationalencyklopedin AB) facilitates reading comprehension and offers students to adjust reading level as they go along.

Play services – documentaries, feature films and educational films in various languages.

Overall, the technological rapid change in the world has transformed and is transforming the ways we live, work and interact with each other. In that context we can see that education needs to adapt and that language can be used in many various ways and contexts. It is of utter importance that students need to use a variety of virtual and physical resources. (IB, 2021b p 3)

The language policy is to be updated and self-evaluated yearly by *Guidelines for school self-reflection on its language policy* by the pedagogical leadership team and the IBDP teachers.

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