



**ACORNS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL**  
INSPIRING AND EMPOWERING

# LANGUAGE POLICY

**ACORNS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL**  
INSPIRING AND EMPOWERING

Reviewed: April 2022

## Abstract

At AIS we believe in learning the language, learning through language and learning about language. Our commitment to successful language learning and acquisition is enshrined in our school's value of Multilingualism.

## Reviewed by:

**Rachelle Hale**

Head of Learner Support Services and  
PYP Curriculum Coordinator

**Sam Weavers**

MYP Curriculum Coordinator

**Kenneth Kanyesigye**

DP/A Levels Curriculum Coordinator

# Language Policy

AIS's philosophy of language is that the teaching of language has a crucial role to play in equipping learners with the communication skills they need to become effective learners in the world of work and society in general. We believe that our language curriculum reflects the benefits of our cultural and linguistic diversity and provides learners with positive images through their reading of literature. Every learner at AIS is entitled to an experience of language learning that supports his/her development in all areas of education. All our students, irrespective of age, ability, gender and ethnic origin are entitled to participate fully in, and benefit from a broad range of appropriate language teaching and learning activities at every stage of their education. In line with IB philosophy, our goals remain to learn the language, learn about language and learn through language.

## English: The Language of Instruction/Official Working Language

English is a vital way of communicating in school, in public life and internationally. Where feasible, AIS approaches English language learning through transdisciplinary skills and integrates instruction into the units of inquiry. In learning English students develop skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. It enables them to express themselves creatively and imaginatively and to communicate with others effectively. For all communications and publishing, AIS uses standard British English.

## Mother Tongue

*During the Covid-19 Pandemic, Mother Tongue classes were suspended in order to maintain social bubbles and SOPs. These classes will be active again when safe to do so.*

Due to having a wide range of cultures and mother-tongue languages spoken, we want to be able to honour these languages even though they are not the language of instruction. That is why the school obtains information about a student's language profile when they join the school and keeps track of the range of languages that are represented amongst the student population. The school collects information about the various languages that a student speaks: the language considered to be the student's best, mother tongue - the language(s) spoken at home and any other languages that have previously been studied or learned. This is entered into the school system and is referenced while making placements for new students to their respective mother tongue classes. The school rolls out new mother tongue classes based on the class quota and the availability of a facilitator or a parent volunteer to facilitate the programme. Learners of languages that fail to hit the quota attend the reading club offered at the same time as the mother tongue lessons. We believe that these mother-tongue languages should be developed and not lost due to the following reasons:

- Knowing their mother tongue helps the child build personal, social and cultural identity.
- English language learners learn English more quickly and effectively using progressive formalisation from their native tongue
- Some students will eventually go back to their country of origin and therefore need to develop their proficiency in their mother tongue.
- To keep family unity and not alienate the child, the student should continue to learn their mother tongue language.

As a school, we offer different ways to develop the different mother tongue languages that are represented in the school:

- We have dedicated an entire section in our library to mother tongue languages. Students are free to check out books from their mother tongue to take home and practice reading with their parents.
- We offer mother tongue classes in school to develop and maintain the student's proficiency in their mother tongue language. Parents, teachers and any other volunteers that have mastered the mother tongue language will lead the classes.
- Mother tongue languages are also represented in the various school events during the calendar year. This helps to promote the unity between all of the cultures represented at school as well as promote an appreciation for each student's mother tongue.
- All classes feature a multilingual word wall with the languages of the students in the class.

In the Secondary Department:

- Each subject area has scheduled mother tongue integration in at least one unit in each year of the taught programme.
- We have dedicated an entire section in our library to mother tongue languages. Students are free to check out books from their mother tongue in order to take home and practice reading with their parents.
- We host a Celebration of Learning event at the end of every year where students put together a performance that revolves around their own culture and mother tongue languages.
- Mother tongue languages play a key role in the presentations of both Community Projects and Personal Projects.
- Mother tongue languages are also represented in the various school events during the calendar year. This helps to promote the unity between all of the cultures represented at school as well as promote appreciation for each student's individual mother tongue.

## English Language Learners

Our student population is very diverse and consists of native English speakers as well as English Language Learners (ELLs). To provide the best educational services for these students, we have provided various mediums to make their transition to an English speaking school smooth. The following methods are used to ensure successful inclusion into AIS:

- Initial MAP Reading assessment upon enrolment in the school to gauge the level of reading proficiency.
- Language Support Lessons with an experienced teacher to develop areas that need improvement as per the language scope and sequence document.
- Special provisions in the classroom depending on the particular needs of the student (e.g. reading assistance, differentiated learning objectives, etc.).
- Direct involvement with the parents to provide links between what is being taught at school and what is happening at home.

## Language Acquisition

As a commitment to IB philosophy and the school value of multilingualism, AIS provides opportunities for its students to acquire other languages. We offer French as an international language and Kiswahili as a national and regional language. Instruction begins at the age of three and seven for French and Kiswahili respectively; though assessed and reported on, the purpose of language acquisition is to build a working knowledge of the language and develop an appreciation for diverse modes of communication.

### MYP Language and Literature and Language Acquisition

All students in the MYP programme must take Language and Literature in English. Students that score below a benchmark on the standardized MAP assessment will be required to drop their second additional Language Acquisition course (French or Kiswahili) and take an English Language Acquisition class according to need.

### MYP Language Acquisition

Acorns International MYP offers a proficiency-based approach to language learning taught in six phases so that the complexity and range of language profiles that students bring to their MYP classroom are acknowledged and fostered. Students come to MYP language study from various experiences. For example, MYP students may have exited from the PYP with any number of years of French or Kiswahili, while other students coming from other schools may have completed a different language acquisition program. Conversely, students may have no prior knowledge or experience of the language to be studied in the MYP. (IB MYP Language Acquisition Guide, September 2014). Upon entering the MYP programme, students select a language to study and continue its study until completion of Year 9, MYP 3. Currently, language instruction is offered in French and Kiswahili, French as the global language, and Kiswahili as the regional language. As explained in the IB MYP Language Acquisition Guide, planning, teaching, and language acquisition skills are mapped on continuums to show clear expectations for each phase. Students develop the ability to communicate appropriately and effectively in an increasing range of social, cultural, and academic contexts, and for an increasing variety of audiences and purposes.

This is demonstrated by:

- The variety and sophistication of vocabulary and structures used.
- The scope of situations in which the language is used.
- The increasing length of text spoken, read, and written.
- The increasing complexity of text spoken, viewed, read, and written.
- The increasing variety of forms of both fiction and non-fiction handled.

As students develop their understanding, increasing expectations are set. Further detail is provided below in the MYP language acquisition global proficiency table. The table provides six holistic statements describing a student's achievement against the course objectives along the continuum from emergent communicator to a capable communicator to a proficient communicator. The characteristics of a communicator in each phase are explained as to what the students should be able to do by the end of the phase.

All of this is done in the pursuit of acquiring the character trait ‘Communicator’ as it is detailed in the IB Learner Profile, and reiterated in our own vision statement and values.

## **Planning Language Learning**

Every learning experience is a literacy experience. We think through language. We speak and listen through language. We read and write through language. Every aspect of our lives is enhanced by our ability to communicate through language. Each curriculum area has its specialised language, e.g. investigations of a scientific or mathematical kind give opportunities for speaking and listening through discussion, for planning, for making suggestions, asking questions and reporting results. There are specific formats of reading and writing e.g. non-chronological reports, explanations and instructions. Every subject within the curriculum contains opportunities for speaking and listening, reading and writing.

## **Approaches to Teaching Language**

To enable access to the whole curriculum for every student, to cater for the variety of learning styles within each class, and to ensure progression and reinforcement of skills and concepts throughout the year groups, we employ a variety of teaching styles.

- Literacy is a basic skill and is key to creativity, imagination and critical thinking. We want our students to find learning exciting, compelling and intrinsically worthwhile. Therefore, we use a variety of interactive teaching and learning techniques so that students can respond successfully to their learning.
- We plan activities where students:
  - integrate prior and new knowledge
  - acquire and use a range of learning skills
  - solve problems individually and in groups
  - think carefully about their successes and failures
  - evaluate conflicting evidence and think critically
  - accept that learning involves uncertainty and difficulty
- We use questions as a tool for learning. Effective questioning shows how learning evolves. Appropriately designed questions lead students from unsorted knowledge to understanding, teaching students how to use them for effective learning.
- We use a wide variety of materials to enable every student to access the planned learning experience and to achieve the planned teaching and learning objectives.
- We give students the opportunity to work in a variety of ways - whole class, groups (of differing sizes and composition), as pairs and individuals, according to their needs, the nature of the activity and the learning objectives.
- We build students' confidence and self-esteem and enable them to become effective language users by:
  - Sharing teaching and learning objectives and clarifying expected outcomes in a language that students can understand
  - Teaching students to be reflective, thinkers, inquiries
  - Encouraging students to learn from and support one another, and to realise that they do not all have to be at the same level or arrive at the same point at the same time. There are many routes to the same destination, positive and constructive oral and/or written feedback

- We create an environment where **all** students can make progress. We teach **all** students and ensure that **all** students know this.
- We enable students to develop written and spoken Standard English through the model we set as teachers, and through sharing and providing good quality reading and writing materials and texts.

## Assessing Speaking and Listening, Reading and Writing

We need to be clear about what is being assessed. It is **not the** accent, dialect, length of contribution, opinion, confidence or leadership qualities. We assess:

- The effectiveness of students' talk and its adaptation to purpose, context and audience
- Contributions to and within groups clarity in communicating, including giving reasons, clear sequences of ideas and appropriate use of Standard English
- We make the assessment criteria clear to all students.
- We collect evidence in all subjects. For example, during a literacy lesson, a Teaching Assistant could be assigned to focus on two or three students making notes of their specific contributions and detailing how well they listen. Or, students could be asked to give instructions during a unit of inquiry lesson, and the criteria would relate to the brevity and clarity of the wording, the sequence in which the instructions are given, and the choice of appropriate vocabulary to convey the technical information.

## Reading

Reading is promoted to reinforce the language learned and build new vocabulary. A library lesson has been worked into the weekly schedule of each EC and Primary class. To reinforce a culture of reading, students are required to check out a book for the week. Access to the library is provided for further reading or checking out of books.

In EC and PYP 1, we implement the Floppy Phonics curriculum to promote early reading and writing skills. Project X Guided Reading is used from Reception to PYP 6. Both programmes are from Oxford University Press.

### Reviewed by:

Rachelle Hale – Head of Learner Support Services, PYP Curriculum Coordinator

Sam Weavers, MYP Curriculum Coordinator

Ken Kanyesigye – DP/A Levles Curriculum Coordinator

**Date of Review:** April 2022

**Next Review Due on:** August 2024