



## Language Policy

### 1. Statement of Philosophy

*"Language stands at the centre of many interdependent cognitive, affective and social factors that shape learning" David Corson, Language Policy in Schools: A Resource for teachers and Administrators (1999)*

At Discovery College, we use language as a medium of inquiry, providing opportunities to challenge, nurture and develop both first and second language speakers.

Language does not operate in isolation but in the context of human experience and communication. Learning language is integral to the development of personal, cognitive, social and cultural identity as well as to making meaning of the world around us. Discovery College recognises that language is the foundation of all learning. Students learn language, learn through language, and learn about language.

We believe that students bring to any learning situation their prior knowledge and engage with the curriculum through the activities and assessments experienced. Within the interrelated components of the curriculum, students make sense of these experiences and construct meaning.

All teaching and learning is driven by the idea that through language, we are encouraging intercultural awareness and new perspectives, a culture of curiosity, as well as an appreciation of the richness of our world's diversity. We strongly believe that through this exploration of language, students develop as deeper, independent thinkers; as responsible, understanding citizens of the world; and as better communicators in our multilingual world.

All students experience an enriched English-medium language programme. Discovery College's curriculum is accessed through English, and it is also recognized that Individuals and Societies, Technology, Mathematics, the Arts, Sciences and Physical and Health Education all have important communicative aspects. These aspects help students render multiple disciplinary, transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary understandings of the world.

Mandarin, and in the secondary school, Spanish, are taught as our additional languages. In the DP, students have the option of pursuing a self-taught language with a view to mother-tongue maintenance and development, and to access the Bilingual Diploma.

#### 1.1 Essential Agreements for the Teaching of Language:

All students:

- Are taught language by all staff and have opportunities to read, write, view, investigate, inquire and present across the curriculum.
- Are taught literacy skills in context.
- encouraged to develop a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, respond to, appreciate and construct texts.
- Are encouraged to use self-correcting strategies.
- Have access to, and are taught through, a variety of technological and information resources.
- Are encouraged to express themselves, orally and in writing, in a variety of media and situations.
- Are encouraged to share and develop their work in a social context.
- Are encouraged to see language as a tool for thinking, inquiring, reflecting and learning.
- Are encouraged to maintain and value their mother tongue and to value that of other students.
- Are given the opportunity to become proficient in more than one language.
- Are exposed to a broad range of literature reflecting a variety of cultures and perspectives.
- Are encouraged to develop a love of language and literature.
- Receive constructive and specific feedback from teachers and peers.
- Are exposed to modelling of rich language experiences.
- Are given time to reflect on their learning and to apply techniques appropriately.

### 2. English as the language of instruction at Discovery College

We consider all Discovery College teachers to be language teachers and the language development of our students to be the shared responsibility of teachers, parents and students. Discovery College understands that the most conducive environment to language learning is a positive and encouraging one, wherein students have the opportunity to engage in authentic and meaningful learning experiences.



We understand that because our students come with many different language backgrounds, they will all progress at different paces. Discovery College values differentiated and varied instruction, which embraces multiple learning styles. All teaching integrates the skill areas of listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and presenting.

### **2.1 Primary Years Programme (PYP)**

In the PYP, language learning takes place in authentic contexts and is dynamic, challenging and relevant. Through the transdisciplinary units of inquiry and conceptual learning, students are encouraged to construct linguistic meaning using a range of strategies, make connections across content and make ongoing cultural discoveries. Through a literature-rich environment with numerous experiences in language learning the curriculum builds on students' prior knowledge and understanding.

### **2.2 Middle Years Programme (MYP)**

Language teaching in the MYP builds upon the competency and fluency of the PYP with rich language experiences of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and presenting through a range of media and information technologies. The overarching focus is language as a means of exploration, expression and communication. Clarity and accuracy of language as well as confidence of self-expression are fostered and reflective practices are modelled and encouraged. As students mature and gain a greater awareness of themselves and the world in which they live, their language development is supported through an increasingly sophisticated engagement and appreciation of world literature.

The performance of students through the MYP's Language and Literature courses is regularly monitored to ensure that courses have appropriate rigour to develop students' language skills and ensure that individual learning styles and paces are factored into the programme. This process of monitoring will also be used to recommend Diploma Programme language courses at the conclusion of the MYP.

Interdisciplinary learning in the MYP prepares students for communicating understandings across the disciplines. In MYP interdisciplinary learning, students learn to select, integrate and innovate communication forms and strategies, and describe and explain the results of their inquiries. In communicating their learning, students will learn to communicate effectively with a range of audiences.

### **2.3 Diploma Programme (DP)**

Subjects in Groups 3-6 and Theory of Knowledge (ToK) are taught through the medium of English. All students therefore use the English language as a means of gaining, communicating and evaluating knowledge and ideas, as well as a means of exploring multiple cultural perspectives. Through the language unit of the ToK course, students will become explicitly aware of these multiple functions of language. Virtually all students study English as their Group 1 subject, although it is possible to take two languages other than English, as long as at least one of them is taken as a first language, i.e. Language A.

## **3. Languages other than English**

As an international school situated in Hong Kong, we are committed to enabling students to achieve proficiency in Mandarin, the official language of China. Discovery College values the learning of Mandarin and believes that Mandarin learning provides valuable insights and perspectives into Chinese culture, traditions and history.

Throughout their schooling, students will be provided with learning opportunities appropriate to their level of ability and background in learning Mandarin. We develop and support students who can operate in traditional and modern simplified written forms. It is important to note that Discovery College does not offer a bilingual Mandarin and English programme.

While placing emphasis on the importance of Mandarin in the school's context, Discovery College recognises that for some students there are exceptional factors that mean the study of a language other than Mandarin in the MYP will better fit their situation. At Discovery College, we offer Spanish as our alternative Language Acquisition subject in the MYP.

The factors that may be the basis for admission of a student into the MYP Spanish class include:

- Spanish-speaking heritage
- Current, or likelihood of future, engagement with Spanish-speaking communities
- Study of Spanish at a previous school



Spanish is only offered as a Language Acquisition subject and so mother tongue speakers of Spanish are not able to access the Spanish class. No more than 20 students in any year group will study Spanish. Parents who believe their child may meet the exceptional factors required for admission into the MYP Spanish class, and who wish their child to study Spanish, may request that their child be admitted to the Spanish class prior to the start of Year 7 or, in the case of students admitted partway through Y7-11, upon enrolment. The school will then decide whether the student should be admitted to the Spanish class.

Mandarin and Spanish are the two Language Acquisition Subjects available at Discovery College. The school does not include within its MYP curriculum Language Acquisition subjects that are self-studied by the student or taught by outside tutors, though it does provide support and encouragement for students to develop their Mother Tongue as outlined below.

In the PYP and MYP, students are placed in classes according to their level of proficiency and experience. These different courses lead to the study of Language Acquisition, Language and Literature and Literature.

The College reserves the right to place students in language courses according to their level of proficiency in the language.

### 3.1 PYP

Mandarin language learning at Discovery College is delivered using a range of methods, including whole class small group and co-teaching. Activities such as songs, games, labelling and other language rich activities are provided for students. Where possible, connections are made with the concepts and Central Ideas of the Programme of Inquiry (POI). Spanish is not offered in the PYP.

### 3.2 MYP

Students are placed in MYP Language Acquisition or Language and Literature classes according to their language ability. All MYP Language teachers work collaboratively to promote learning through language and literature, communication of ideas and Global Contexts. These initiatives directly support the fundamental concepts of the MYP and facilitate links between subject groups and strong links between the cultures and languages studied.

In the MYP, students' additional language learning is structured in six phases so that the complexity and range of language profiles that students bring to their classroom is acknowledged and fostered. The phases do not correspond to particular age groups or MYP years.

PYP	MYP	DP
Pathway 1	Language Acquisition: Phase 1	Ab initio
Pathway 1 and 2	Language Acquisition: Phase 2	Ab initio (in rare cases) Language B SL
Pathway 2 and 3	Language Acquisition: Phase 3	Language B SL
Pathway 3	Language Acquisition: Phase 4	Language B SL/HL
Pathway 3	Language Acquisition: Phase 5	Language B SL/HL Language A: language and literature SL Language A: literature SL
Pathway 3	Language Acquisition: Phase 6	Language A: language and literature SL/HL Language A: literature SL/HL
Pathway 3	Language and literature	Language A: language and literature SL/HL Language A: literature SL/HL

(Adapted from *MYP Language Acquisition Guide*, IBO 2014c, p. 6)



Students are expected to study the same language acquisition course in each year of the MYP, or achieve a satisfactory proficiency in phase 4 in order to transfer to another language.

### **3.3 DP**

Students will follow the language course that is most suited to their present and future needs and that will provide them with an appropriate academic challenge. The degree to which students are already competent in the language, and the degree of proficiency they wish to attain by the end of the period of study, are the most important factors in identifying the appropriate placement point on the spectrum of language courses available. The College reserves the right to place students in language courses according to their level of proficiency in the language.

Mandarin and Spanish are available as ab initio courses.

### **3.4 Mother Tongue Support**

Discovery College believes that mother tongue language development is crucial to maintaining cultural identity. While we do not offer bilingual programmes, we do recognise that strength in mother tongue supports students in learning other languages. International schools have a special responsibility to recognise and support each and every aspect of language development.

With a significant proportion of students at Discovery College speaking a mother tongue other than Mandarin or English, we acknowledge the need to support these additional languages. Discovery College offers support for mother tongue groups where communities of speakers of the same language can gather together to foster the use of the mother tongue as a way of developing academic language proficiency as well as emotional and social proficiency.

In the DP, students have the option of studying their mother tongue as a self-taught option for Language A: Literature at Standard Level. The College, in collaboration with ESF Language Centre, facilitates contact with an appropriate tutor of that language, and a school-based mentor to ensure that the students remain on target for fulfilling the various aspects of the course. It is not possible to study Language B as a self-taught option and DC does not support within its DP curriculum any courses taught by outside tutors apart from through DP Self-Taught Language A: Literature SL.

The school encourages and supports the work of parent-run mother tongue groups. Students may be able to access particular mother tongue classes through ESF, some funded by ESF. These access arrangements include the opportunity to gain formal IGCSE qualifications. The school will also assist mother tongue students to find local mother tongue support groups.

Students are encouraged to use their mother tongue both inside and outside of the classroom.

Refer to Appendix 1 for the school's student mother tongue language profile.

### **3.5 English as an Additional Language (EAL)**

The term EAL is used to refer to students for whom English is an additional language. Students of all linguistic backgrounds are considered for admission to Discovery College. However, the admissions process seeks to determine whether learners are sufficiently proficient in English so that they can successfully access the curriculum in an English medium learning environment. Upon admission, those students who may be in need of English language support are identified.

Across all three IB programmes we are committed to offering a differentiated system of inclusive support to our EAL students, which might sometimes include parallel teaching in small groups. Appropriate scaffolding across all areas of the curriculum is required in order for EAL learners to succeed in achieving their potential. In order to track and monitor students' progress in addition to informing curriculum design and support levels in the MYP a benchmarking system is used.

## **4. The role of the library**

The library provides a range of print and online resources, including databases and subscriptions to online journals. The library also carries a collection of mother tongue resources, including Korean, Chinese, Danish, French, German and Spanish titles. Chinese titles include texts in both traditional and simplified Chinese characters.



The library also plays a role in promoting the school's Academic Honesty by supporting student understanding of the school's use of American Psychological Association (APA) citation and referencing convention. The library's DING! page contains extensive academic honesty resources.

### **5. Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

In keeping with the philosophy of all three IB programmes, Discovery College has adopted an inclusive model of learning support. This means that students with individual needs are supported within mainstream classes and all students are given full access to the curriculum.

Teachers respond to the diverse learning needs and styles of the students in their care through using a variety of differentiation strategies to deliver the programme. These strategies may include the use of learning technologies, simplifying texts, supplementing information, providing checklists, using alternative forms of assessment and making assessment arrangements.

In cases where students' barriers to learning preclude the development of age appropriate literacy skills and additional support is required, mainstream class teachers may refer the student to the Learning Development Team. The referral process at Discovery College is in line with the ESF Guidelines for Implementation of the ESF SEN Policy (2008). The College is committed to providing support to students at Levels of Adjustment (LOA) 1-2. (Please refer to SEN policy document for further details).

Once referred to the Learning Development Team, students may be supported through parallel teaching, co-teaching, small group conferencing and if circumstances require, there may be some more intensively individual support provided for Level of Adjustment 2 (LOA2) students. It is expected that the college and parents work in partnership to help develop students' literacy skills.



**Appendix 1.**

**Table 1. Whole College language profile**

Language	Percentage of total school population
English	67.4
Cantonese	5.6
Mandarin	4.3
Japanese	1.3
Dutch	1.0
Korean	1.0
German	0.8
French	0.5

**Source:** Discovery College's Gateway database (2017). Updated annually

**Table 2. Primary language profile**

Language	Percentage of total school population
English	74.7
Cantonese	5.0
Mandarin	5.0
Dutch	1.4
Japanese	1.4
Korean	0.9
Italian	0.5
Afrikaans	0.2

**Source:** Discovery College's Gateway database (2017). Updated annually

**Table 3. Secondary language profile**

Language	Percentage of total school population
English	59.9
Cantonese	6.2
Mandarin	3.6
German	1.4
Japanese	1.2
Korean	1.1
French	1.1
Dutch	0.6

**Source:** Discovery College's Gateway database (2017). Updated annually



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