

TIS Language Policy

1. Policy Statement

Tema International School places importance on language learning, including mother tongue, host country language and other languages. The school utilizes the resources and expertise of the school community to enhance language learning through collaborative planning and reflection with a recognition that all teachers are responsible for the language development of students. Teaching and learning address the diversity of student language needs, including those for students learning languages other than their mother tongue, and assessment at school aligns with the requirements of the programme(s).

2. Implementation

Since English is the language of instruction at TIS, all students are required to take English as a first language subject and a second language (French and/or Spanish) to meet Language Acquisition requirements in Grades 7 – 12.

At IB Diploma Programme level, based on the need and availability of resources, there is the option, including school supported self-taught, to take languages other than English as a language option in Group 1 to support mother tongue development. TIS works with Pamoja in order to offer subjects requested by students for whom no qualified teacher can be directly recruited by the school, and this includes teachers of mother tongue languages other than English which are recognized by the IB.

Students whose language skills are not up to a phase level in certain areas, or have English not being their first language, are offered support in order to acquire the skills required for success at their grade level. The determination of the need for support and the kind of support are based on a student's achievement level at entry. The support takes a variety of forms, such as in-class or inclusion support and/or withdrawal intensive language learning support. At the IB MYP level, the students take English as the option for Language and Literature as a subject. At the IBDP level, students have a choice of studying English A: Literature or English A: Language and Literature at either the higher and standard levels.

At TIS, students take both French and Spanish as an additional language in Grades 7 & 8 using the MYP Language Acquisition curriculum. At the Primary School level, Ghanaian Sign Language is taught as a second language. Teaching and learning in MYP Language Acquisition is organized into six phases, which represent a developmental continuum in acquiring an additional language. When looking at the assessment criteria for students, it is important first to identify the phase level at which the student is currently working.

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If a student is in his/her first year of studying French and/or Spanish, he/she is placed in phase 1. Students with an intermediate proficiency in the language are placed in any of the phases 2 to 4 depending on the standard the student has reached in order to progress to the next phase of learning. For each phase there are phase-specific language acquisition objectives described, which form a planning of progression of learning. These descriptors enable teachers to identify, for each student, the phase in which he or she will commence their MYP Language Acquisition course.

In Grades 9 and 11, students choose either French or Spanish as an elective for Language Acquisition, including the option of ab initio in the DP. In each program the relevant objectives are used for teaching and learning. Mother tongue classes are conducted as part of the After-School Activities (ASA) programme.

3. Review

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APPENDICES

1. Language Profile

The majority of the students are of West African origin, while others hold passports from the US, UK, Canada, Australia, Kenya and China. About 84% of the students also have a mother-tongue, including Twi, Fante, Ga, Ewe, Hausa and Ibo. Where possible, these languages, as well as other foreign languages, are supported by teachers to teach these as part of co-curricular activities.

2. Language and International-Mindedness

TIS seeks to enable learners to function as internationally-minded global citizens which, in part, entails the ability to adapt capably and comfortably within and between cultures. TIS organizes language development programmes and activities such as the annual Creative Writers' Workshop and annual study tours to France and Spain.

3. Key Elements of Language Learning

Currently, the following subjects are on offer across English, French and Spanish.

- PYP English
- PYP Ghanaian Sign Language, Mandarin, French, Twi and Ewe
- MYP Language and Literature (English)
- MYP Language Acquisition (French and Spanish)
- DP English A: Language and Literature HL and SL
- DP English A: Literature HL and SL
- DP Language B French HL and SL
- DP Language B French Ab Initio
- DP Language B Spanish HL and SL
- DP Language B Spanish Ab Initio

In special cases a mother-tongue different from English can be taken as a Group 1 language in DP.

In order to meet the objectives of Language and Literature, teachers of English concentrate on each of the macro skills of language: listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and presenting. These are very much interactive and interrelated, though teachers may choose to emphasize them in discrete learning experiences.

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4. Interdisciplinary Connections

In subject areas, collaboration and reflection among teachers ensure that all teachers are responsible for language development of students. The Language and Literature Department is to support teachers through short review sessions to help them play this role effectively.

5. Learning Centre

The school's Learning Centre is stocked with books, a majority of which are in the English language. Students also have access to books on the internet (<https://tis.oliverasp.co.uk>).

6. Further Considerations

Considering the requirements of the IB Language Policy together with the challenges the school faces with the Mother Tongue Development Programme as a co-curricular activity, a more critical look towards formalizing the programme may be necessary with time. In this regard, we may have to explore the possibility of providing at least one teaching period per week for teachers who are capable and interested in teaching a mother tongue to support students as part of a more formally-structured programme.

The school may also have to explore whether hiring part-time or supplement teachers to support students with their mother tongue development is the way to go in order to enable the building of a workable effective mother tongue programme. In connection with this, there will be time allotted on the timetable for the teaching and learning of mother tongues. With the wide variety of mother tongues in school, this may start with three main Ghanaian and other foreign languages as applicable. To also promote the speaking of mother tongue and encourage students to appreciate the mother tongue study programme there will also be the institution of Mother Tongue Day where the school community will be expected to communicate in their mother tongue throughout the day.

In addition, service trips to communities that will enable some of these students to interact with the people and other forms of exposure to their culture may be an aspect that we will have to consider in order to ensure that students are proficient not only in the speaking of their mother tongue, but knowledgeable in their various cultural idiosyncrasies that are necessary for one to communicate effectively in a language. Review of the process used to identify the language needs of each learner will also be required.

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7. Bibliography

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