



TITLE: Language Policy

“Communicators: We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.” (Learner Profile, IBO, 2013)

Objective

This document outlines the philosophy and practice of language instruction at the Canadian International School of Kunshan (CISK) and demonstrates how CISK supports students' acquisition of our language of instruction (English), and our host-country Language (Chinese - Mandarin). It also shows how CISK supports the continued use of English and the students' mother tongue to develop our core values of academic excellence, community, personal growth, and international mindedness.

Core Values**1. Academic Excellence**

The acquisition of language and ongoing improvement of literacy skills are directly related to critical thinking, higher order thinking skills, creativity and a love of knowledge. The language policy recognizes this and extends this recognition to fully endorse the extended benefits in the acquisition of additional languages. This policy also considers all teachers to be language teachers and, further, recognizes the importance of differentiated instruction that supports students will varying levels of language facility.

2. Community

The language policy recognizes the role of language in successful cooperation and the building of strong and productive relationships across the CISK community. Caring, clear and supportive communication in all languages between students, staff and parents, builds trust and fosters a safe, structured environment for all.

3. Personal Growth

The language policy recognizes the role of language in creating an environment of mutual respect, one that supports debate, balanced with reflection and through language fosters inclusion and open-mindedness.

4. International Mindedness

The language policy builds on the current language culture of the schools location, and while English is the main language of instruction, embraces the cultural diversity of its student body, and broader community, and supports the equal learning of all languages. The policy recognizes that language is the gateway to understanding the values and traditions of all cultures and as such, enables international understanding. The policy promotes the learning of second languages for all and supports the study in the student's mother tongue where possible.

Language Philosophy

At CISK we believe that:

- Language is the primary means of communicating and learning.
- Language is intimately linked to both culture and identity and the acquisition of language is a life-long process. It is a central component of intellectual and social development.
- All languages, including the language of instruction and mother tongue languages at CISK, are valued, encouraged and celebrated.
- The most conducive environment for language learning is a positive and encouraging one, where students have the opportunity to engage in **authentic** and **meaningful** experiences. Language is most effectively used by students as a vehicle for inquiry, self-expression and communication, in a range of authentic situations and for a variety of purposes.
- Language learning promotes international mindedness and multicultural understanding. The whole school community develops a respect for other languages and cultures, including that of our host country.
- The development of the mother-tongue language is critical for maintaining one's cultural identity. Language is an expression of culture and must be valued as an integral part of a student's identity.
- We are continually developing our learning resources so that they reflect the diverse languages and cultural background represented within our student body.
- Proficiency earned in one language is transferable to other languages, and language proficiency aids the student in acquiring competencies in all curricular areas.
- All teachers are language teachers. Language learning must be fostered in all aspects of the school community. Teachers must strive to recognize the

language needs of all students and work to serve these needs inside and outside of the classroom.

- Understanding that all students' progress at different paces, the on-going language development of students is the shared responsibility of all stakeholders: parents, students, teachers, administration, and staff.

Language Profile

As it is the common language in which all communication and access to the curriculum occur, the support and development of English within the school are paramount. English language learning is not something that solely happens at a set time with a set teacher, instead, it happens across the disciplines and every teacher is required to model the use of language emphasizing clear and concise communication. All CISK teachers have a responsibility to address the language needs of their students in the language of instruction.

In the 2021-2022 school year, CISK has a population of approximately 400 students. The majority of which are native Chinese speakers. Other languages spoken by students at school vary. Examples include Spanish, Russian, French and Taiwanese.

CISK also recognizes the importance of language learning for our staff and offers lessons in Chinese for English-speaker, so they can better interact with the culture and people around them, appreciate the cultural background of their colleagues and students, and to enable better communication between faculty and the wider community.

Language and Teaching at CISK

CISK places great importance on language learning. The instruction of the DP program is entirely in English, excluding alternate languages taught in groups 1 and 2. Best practices for language learning at CISK are informed by student-centered learning and experience. Presentations, public speaking skills, writing competitions, reading events, and any activities that promote language learning are highly encouraged. Criteria for grades 6-10 are based on the IB MYP criteria and system of phases (see MYP specific section of the Language Policy for more information), and DP criteria are used for grades 11 and 12.

Placement into either group 1 or 2 DP languages will be based on numerous factors such as past student performance, current MYP phase level, DP entrance examinations, number of years of study in the language in question, and personal experience. Each student is handled individually regarding their placement and the school strives to ensure that students are placed in a fair, challenging, and appropriate level that allows for the demonstration of their ability and the further development of their skills. While very open to discussing placement with students and their families, the

school has final decision as to the placement of all DP students into group 1 and 2 respectively.

Group 1 Language A Courses

Students at CISK have the option to study English, Chinese or a self-taught fluency language (see note below) to fulfill their Language A component. Students can choose between Language and Literature or Literate options in English and Chinese, any other languages are taken as Literature SSST.

Language A courses in DP are taken in the student's native language. Two group 1 languages can be taken if a student is fluent in more than one language.

CISK supports Language A learning through a variety of means, including a range of text types, one-on-one support, and differentiation. The library and electronic resources are offered in as many languages as possible to support all classes and the school works to grow these resources yearly. For DP, no specific language apps are used, but in the years approaching DP students have access to a library platform for reading success and undergo MAP testing for fluency at the start and end of each school year.

Group 2 Language B and *Ab Initio* Courses

Currently CISK does not offer any *Ab Initio* courses, but as our DP cohort grows, we hope to offer more options for our students.

Students at CISK have the option to study English B or Chinese B to fulfill their group 2 language requirement, seeing as one of these two languages is not their native language and that they have not reached a level of fluency that would render the course obsolete for them (see above information regarding placement).

Language B courses in DP are taken in the student's second language.

CISK supports Language B learning through a variety of means, including a range of text types, one-on-one support, and differentiation. In the years leading to DP, student have access to push-in and pull-out support and receive extra support to progress through the phases of MYP Language Acquisition. The CISK library is arranged by Lexile level, supporting student in improving their language by reading and interacting with texts that are both accessible and challenging. All students undergo MAP testing at the start and end of each school year to assess their ability and progress.

Support and mother tongues

At CISK, language development, written and oral development, and second language support are considered an integral part of program design and delivery. CISK offers

many different types of support that help with all areas of language in the school community.

We offer the following support to all language learners at CISK:

- Implementing reading, writing and oral communication strategies across the curriculum.
- Supporting students oral language acquisition giving them ample opportunity to practice their speaking skills
- Selecting and providing access to literature from a variety of cultural backgrounds.
- Providing multiple opportunities at all levels of instruction for students to write in a variety of genres.
- Allowing students ample choice in their reading materials and encouraging reading for enjoyment.
- Providing differentiated instruction for all students
- Assessing students formally and informally in a variety of ways.

We offer several types of mother tongue language supports:

- Bulletins, websites and other publications are published bilingually in Mandarin, our most common Mother Tongue, as well as in English.
- Internal communications are translated in-house into Mandarin,
- The library includes materials to support the use of Mandarin.
- Support for students with a mother tongue other than English or Mandarin is evaluated on an individual basis in consultation with the students' parents/guardians.

CISK also offers several programs and options that illustrate the central role language plays in our education program.

1- The Chinese Jiangsu Province Diploma

The importance of language acquisition at CISK is reflected in the CISK Jiangsu Diploma. Students at CISK are required to develop their first and second languages in order to remain or become bilingual. Students need to complete their Ontario courses in English as well as successfully complete their language credits in Mandarin to obtain this diploma. This program encourages students to study in both English and Mandarin to be successful and develop a deeper level of understanding of the global and local cultures represented at CISK.

2- The IB Bilingual Diploma

The IB Bilingual Diploma is awarded to students who complete two IB language courses selected from IB Group 1 language courses in English, Mandarin or a student's mother tongue, or Group 1 Mandarin and their other Group 3-6 courses in English. The second

combination is most common at CISK and the majority of our students graduate with the Bilingual Diploma via this pathway.

CISK makes available to all of its secondary school students the opportunity to study the following courses in recognition of its language policy:

IBDP Language Courses Offered at CISK:

1. English A – Language and Literature (SL and HL)
2. English A – Literature (SL and HL)
3. Mandarin A – Language and Literature (SL and HL)
4. Mandarin A – Literature (SL and HL)
5. English B (SL and HL)
6. Mandarin B (SL and HL)

CISK also offers the opportunity for students to study a Group 1 language in their mother tongue through the Self-taught School Supported (SSST) course. The offering of this course is subject to availability of a tutor approved by the school and paid for by family. It is important to note the school is not always able to provide this option but will work closely with each student to support them in the best way possible.

3- English Support

As most students at CISK join the school with very low English proficiency, there are programs in place to support our English Language Learners in the years approaching DP. Currently in the years leading to DP, students are enrolled in the MYP curriculum and follow the phase structure of language learning.

We offer the following supports for English Language Learners

- Daily pull-out and push-in support
- On-going assessment beginning in Kindergarten to monitor language development progress.
- High-yield instructional practices in all classes to scaffold acquisition of vocabulary and concepts central to learning by providing visual cues, collaborative learning experiences and consistent assessment of prior knowledge.
- Maintaining on-going communication with parents to best support the students

4- CISK Mandarin Program

The teaching of Mandarin in the Canadian International School Kunshan is offered from JK all the way through to Grade 12. Mandarin programs, just like our English Program are offered to develop fluency in literacy: speaking, writing and reading. Students are assessed to determine their linguistic levels upon admission and programs are developed and delivered to address the individual needs of the student in small ability groupings.

For fluent Mandarin speaking students, advanced Chinese courses are available to develop communication skills in both formal and informal situations. Through a variety of activities, including public speaking and debate, students' oral language skills are enhanced. In addition, students explore China's rich culture through activities such as Chinese painting, calligraphy, and paper cutting.

CISK offers the following IB Courses in Mandarin:

1. Mandarin – Language and Literature (SL and HL)
2. Mandarin – Literature (SL and HL)

5- HSK Test

HSK is a standardized international Chinese language proficiency test for non-native Chinese speakers. HSK is known as the “Chinese IELTS”. It is a requirement for foreigners coming to study in China as well as applying for scholarships and Summer Camp. It is an essential enhancement for career advancement here in China.

CISK was approved by Confucius Institute Headquarters (Hanban) as HSK Test Center in August 2013. It is also the only test center open to all the international schools in Jiangsu Province. CISK is the only facility available to people, within the school or from the wider population, for HSK testing. In alignment with our language policy and mission everyone is encouraged to register at CISK for HSK testing.

The HSK test consists of both a written and oral test. The oral test is divided into three levels: Basic, Elementary-Intermediate and Advanced. The written test has six levels.

Success is achieved as follows:

- Level 1 Candidates can understand and use simple words and sentences to fulfill specific communication needs and have a foundation for the further study of Chinese.
- Level 2 Candidates can communicate daily topics with simple and direct language. Level 2 candidates have reached the advanced stage of the beginner level.
- Level 3 Candidates can complete basic communication tasks in daily life, study and work, as well as while travelling in China.
- Level 4 Candidates can discuss a relatively wide range of topics in Chinese and are able to communicate with native speakers.
- Level 5 Candidates can read Chinese newspapers and magazines, appreciate Chinese films and television and are able to write and deliver a formal speech.
- Level 6 Candidates can easily comprehend spoken language as well have a proficiency in reading. They can express themselves fluently in written and oral Chinese.

Language Accommodations in DP

CISK is compliant with the IB standards and practices and associated IB policies. Teachers, in collaboration with their principal and DP coordinator, will determine the most effective way to document the progress and support of our English learners.

Accommodations

A variety of types of accommodations may be used to support English language learners as they develop English language proficiency. These include the following:

Accommodations related to instructional strategies, such as

- extensive use of visual cues;
- use of graphic organizers;
- strategic use of students' first languages;
- allowance of extra time (under IBO regulations);
- pre-teaching of key words;
- simplification/repetition of instructions as needed;
- Simultaneous use of oral and written instructions.

Accommodations related to learning resources, such as

- extensive use of visual materials;
- use of adapted texts and bilingual dictionaries (where stipulated appropriate by the IBO);
- use of dual-language materials;
- use of technology.

Accommodations related to assessment

- In regards to accommodations related to assessment, as the IBDP is an externally assessed program, there are some possible accommodations, although these are limited for language fluency related issues. Further information regarding these accommodations can be found in the special education needs policy.
- Students who are taking formal examinations in a language that is not their native language, may have access to a translation dictionary for examinations in subject groups 3-6.

Support for students deficient in the language of instruction (English)

Because IBDP at CISK is a fully English program, there is a certain level of English fluency needed to enter the program. Students must demonstrate adequate ability on their entrance examinations and at their entrance interview in order to be considered for

the program. That being said, CISK also realizes that language ability should never be a barrier for students to progress in their academics, and works tirelessly to ensure we prepare our upcoming students for the rigor of the DP, and provide support in any way possible for students who are applying for entrance to the DP from outside of the school. If a student is deemed to have inadequate English proficiency to be successful in DP, the school will work with the family to suggest another program, or educational institute, that will best serve the student.

Communicating the policy:

The language policy will be communicated to the CISK community through various meetings, committees and communication pathways such as staff, parent meetings, department meetings, the website, weekly news and Student and IB Handbooks.

Language Policy Review

As the language needs of the school change regularly, it is a key component of program development to review and adjust the language policy as needed. In order to facilitate this development, the review committee, composed of the Chinese and English department heads, librarian, DP Coordinator, various teachers, and admin meets yearly to review and edit the policy.

Policy last updated: August 2022

Next review: August 2023

Reference Documents

- Guidelines for developing a school language policy. IBO (2008).
- Guidelines for school self - reflection on its language policy. IBO (2012).
- Language and learning in IB Programmes. IBO (2011).
- Growing Success (2010)
- English Language Learners / ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, (2007).