

ISA GZFLS Language Policy

Introduction

The importance of a school language policy is embedded in the IBO Programme Standards and Practices (2022) specifically Standard: Culture through policy implementation (0301) and Practice 0301-04 *The school implements, communicates and regularly reviews a language policy that helps to foster intercultural understanding through communicating in a variety of ways in more than one language.*¹

ISA GZFLS is committed to the development and learning of language throughout our entire school. We believe language is at the heart of understanding and this belief is central to our curriculum and instruction. Consequently, we provide as many opportunities as possible for our students to use language within the context of the curriculum, and in daily interactions with students, teachers, community members, and parents. In the modern world, command of English is an important way to access information and communicate internationally. Every student at the ISA GZFLS has the right to equitable access to the curriculum in order to reach their full potential.

At ISA GZFLS, we believe that proficiency in English is of the highest priority for all students. The language of instruction at the ISA GZFLS is English, except in language other than English classes, and the teaching of language is the responsibility of all teachers.

The school subscribes to the philosophy of immersion where the language of instruction is English, but mother tongue support can be offered to aid understanding. While a student's first language can be helpful to support their initial understanding of a new concept or idea, it is important to ensure that English is the classroom language used as the school's the target language is English.

While the language of instruction is English, with the aim of promoting international mindedness and appreciation, the ISA GZFLS seeks to promote the development of all languages.

Admissions

As part of the process to gain admission to ISA GZFLS, students are required to submit their Zhongkao testing scores, or the most recent scores from IELTS, TOEFL or a similar language test that can be transferred to a CEFR level.

Although the school aims to enroll students who have achieved above 100 for the Zhongkao test, or at a level equivalent of CEFR B1 or above, exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis as the school is required to intake a minimum number of students from the local schooling system.

¹ *Programme Standards and Practices*, IBO, 2022 p11

Procedure/Implementation

According to the International Baccalaureate Organisation, *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.*² ISA GZFLS believes that multilingual skills are necessary for students to be competitive in a global context. In order to cater to the variety of linguistic backgrounds of students, the school's Language program consists of Language and Literature, Language Acquisition and Language Ab Initio

Language A

At ISA GZFLS, Language A refers to the student's first language and is typically spoken with a high degree of fluency whereas Language B is a second or additional language acquisition subject for the student and is likely spoken with less proficiency than Language A. The aim of the Language A programme is to develop students' Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)³. Currently, English and Chinese are available as Language and Literature Courses. In special cases, it is possible to take another language as a School-Supported Self-Study Literature Course in the IB Diploma Programme.

Language B/ESL

Language Acquisition refers to a subject which is a second or additional language where the students are still acquiring the skills to communicate fluently. Progression in language acquisition follows the IB Phases of Language Acquisition global proficiency table from Emergent Communicator (Phase 1/2) to Proficient Communicator (Phase 5/6)⁴. Currently, English and Chinese are offered as a Language Acquisition class.

Language Ab Initio/ESL

Language Ab Initio refers to a subject which is a second or additional language where the students have had no or little exposure to the language. The phrase 'ab initio' is taken to mean 'from the beginning and students entering into the subject will focus on progressing their Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)⁵.

English as a Second Language (ESL)

At ISA GZFLS, English as a Second Language (ESL) refers to a subject where students are offered additional support in learning English based on the skills that are dominant in either TOEFL or IELTS language courses. ESL courses are offered to students in Grade 10 and Grade 11.

BICS and CALP

As children gradually progress through the language learning process, it is important that the adults around them, both educators and family, understand the different language skills that are needed for the different contexts. Learners will generally progress quickly in acquiring Basic Interpersonal

² *Language and Learning in IB Programmes*, IBO 2014, p3

³ Cummins, J. (1999) *BICS and CALP Clarifying the Distinction*.

⁴ Ibid

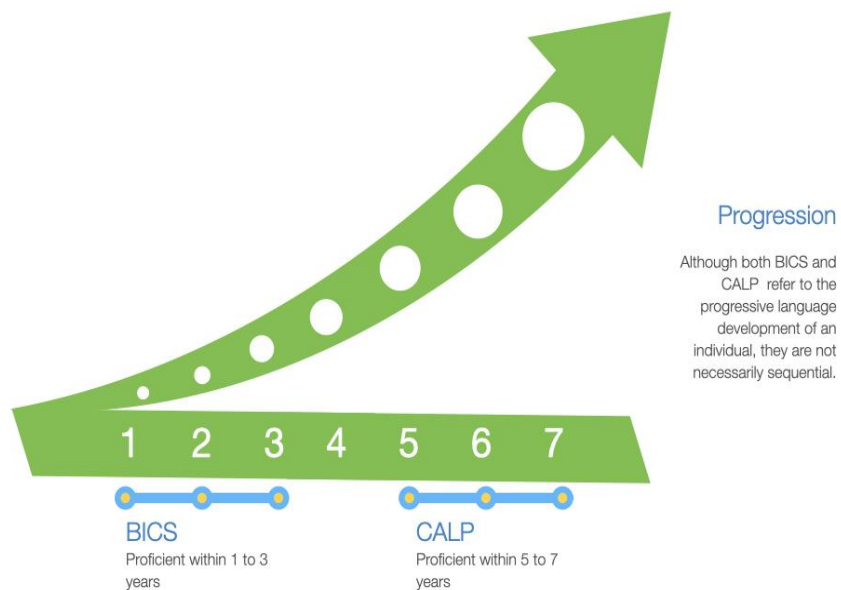
⁵ Ibid

Communication Skills (BICS). These are the language skills needed in all social situations. Children apply these skills constantly in the playground, on the bus, in the lunch hall, in small group social situations and on social networks. While these skills are fundamental to language learning, they are always used within a meaningful social context. At a cognitive level, these skills are not particularly demanding regardless of age.

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) is much more complex in terms of acquisition. This refers to the skills needed for formal academic learning in all areas of the curriculum and that are essential if students are to succeed in school academically. It takes a significant amount of time to become linguistically proficient in all academic areas. It is not simply a case of learning the vocabulary linked to area content. Rather, it involves acquiring language skills such as classifying, comparing, synthesizing, evaluating and inferring. Moreover, as students progress, the supporting context tends to be reduced which therefore increases the complexity of the tasks. Acquiring the skills inherent in Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency is also cognitively demanding.⁶

Approximate timeline for student progression.

BICS and CALP



Placement

- Upon enrollment at the ISA GZFLS students will complete a language profile questionnaire, and a language placement test.
- The Language (language and literature) programs are designed to accommodate English/Chinese first language speakers. One Language and Literature class is mandatory.

⁶ Ibid

- The programs also accommodate bilingual students with English or Chinese as a strong second language and placement in Language B classes will be made judged upon the student's language profile and proficiency test.

Assessment

Students in Language and Literature (LAL), Language Acquisition (Language B), Language Ab Initio will primarily be assessed on criteria adapted from the International Baccalaureate DP and MYP Language and Literature criteria and will primarily focus on:

- Analysing
- Organising
- Producing Text
- Using Language

Students in English as a Second Language (ESL) will primarily be assessed on criteria adapted from the following criteria:

- Listening
- Reading
- Speaking
- Writing

Students in Grades 11-12 will be assessed on the Language and Literature/Language Acquisition International Baccalaureate criteria for the components of the respective Group 1/Group 2 courses.

English Language Program

The language of instruction at ISA GZFLS is English. Upon enrolment in the school, students are supported in their development of the English language in a variety of ways. English language instruction is differentiated to meet the individual differences and learning styles of each student. All of our English language instruction is centered on reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, as well as academic proficiency in the target language. In particular, interactive discussions, group-work dialogue and classroom communications between students and with the teacher should always be in English with first language support in Chinese if necessary. This is to ensure that all members of the class strengthen and improve the development of their English language skills. In accordance with the school's Entry, Promotion and Retention Policy, English language benchmarks are identified thereby promoting high expectations and standards for all students.

IELTS and TOEFL Differentiated Pathway

As each family prioritises different results in accordance with their post-secondary pathway, ISA GZFLS separates and differentiates ESL instruction in Grade 10 and Grade 11. Each student is allowed to select either an IELTS or TOEFL pathway and will receive instruction and test preparation according

to the requirements of the chosen programme. Classes are differentiated based on the most recent testing scores and students are able to move between classes as their English level improves. Students in Grade 11 can ‘test out’ of the additional ESL instruction if they achieve a TOEFL score of 95 (out of 120) or an IELTS score of 6.5 (out of 9). Please see Appendix A for an approximate comparison of TOEFL, IELTS and CEFR.

CEFR and testing

At ISA GZFLS, most subjects are scored from 1 to 7 in accordance with the Diploma Programme. However, IELTS is scored out of a maximum of 9, while TOEFL is scored out of a maximum of 120. To achieve evenness and common understanding, scores are typically transferred to a CEFR score when necessary. Please see Appendix A for an approximate comparison of TOEFL, IELTS and CEFR.

Students arrive at ISA GZFLS having completed different forms of testing, and to achieve consistency, the school undertakes OPT and/or CAT testing at the beginning and end of year.

Language Subject Pathways

Pathways from Grades 10 through to DP Groups 1/2 in our English and Chinese language programs:

Language Progression Options	
Language A: Language and Literature SL/HL Language B Language Ab Initio	
G 10 (end of year level)	DP language options
CEFR A1	Chinese: Language A: Literature SL/HL English Ab initio (CEFR A1.1 - A1.2) French/German/Japanese Ab initio (CEFR A1.1 - A1.2)
CEFR A2	Chinese: Language A: Language and Literature SL/HL English Ab initio (CEFR A1.1 - A1.2) French/German/Japanese Ab initio (CEFR A1.1 - A1.2) English Language B SL (CEFR A2.2)
CEFR B1	Chinese: Language A: Language and Literature SL/HL English Language B SL Language B SL: French/German/Japanese
CEFR B2	Chinese: Language A: Language and Literature SL/HL English: Language B SL/HL Chinese: Language B SL/HL Language B SL/HL: French/German/Japanese
CEFR C1	Chinese: Language A: Language and Literature SL/HL English: Language A: Language and Literature SL/HL English: Language B SL/HL Chinese: Language B SL/HL

	Language B SL/HL: French/German/Japanese
CEFR C2	Chinese: Language A: Language and Literature SL/HL English: Language A: Language and Literature SL/HL English: Language B SL/HL Chinese: Language B SL/HL Language B SL/HL: French/German/Japanese

First Language Support

The student's first language is defined as the language that the child considers to be their strongest or preferred language and is the language in which they have received the most instruction in their years at school. Therefore, it is the language in which the child has developed the concepts and an understanding of the world and will defer to in order to increase that conceptual understanding. First language development is an integral part of the learning process, and ISA GZFLS believes that supporting continued first language development helps create a well-balanced, confident student. ISA GZFLS understands that first language growth helps facilitate greater understanding and comprehension across cultures.

- In Class – Where appropriate teachers may provide support and resources in the students' first language so that students can fully understand the concepts being taught.
- At home – We encourage open communication between parents and teachers about how to support the child's language development, including strategies that can be practiced at home. Information sessions are held regularly to keep parents informed and answer questions about the content.
- Translation support – In instances where meaning requires precision or when a member of the school community cannot access the language, translation support is offered.
- Bilingual communication – Written communication with parents about school matters is always bilingual.
- Guest Speakers – The school brings in guest speakers in the language of the mother tongue to speak and present in the classroom on topics which are being covered, opportunities outside of school and about community service.

Second/Additional Language Support

In the context of ISA GZFLS, a student's second or other language is most often English and the school provides many different methods to aid in the improvement of English as a second or additional language.

Prior to entry into the Diploma Programme, students will receive the following support:

- In Class - Where appropriate teachers may provide bilingual support so that students can fully understand the concepts being taught.

- At home – We encourage open communication between parents and teachers about how to support the child’s language development, including strategies that can be practiced at home. Information sessions are held regularly to keep parents informed and answer questions about the content.
- Frequency of instruction – Students receive up to 8 lessons of English as a Second or Additional language instruction that targets the skills of Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing.
- Immersion – In the context of language learning, immersion promotes bilingualism with the goal of developing native-like competence in English without losing fluency in a student’s first language. At ISA GZFLS, instruction is in English with native language as support for this instruction. The focus is on both language and content in almost all subjects. Students are learning in English and should be responding and interacting in English. **ISA GZFLS is an immersion programme.**

The focus of language at ISA GZFLS is on Basic Interpersonal Skills with some Cognitive Academic Language instruction until the end of Grade 10. Where appropriate, push in and pull out support will be provided by the English as a Second Language Department.

How does this policy link to other policies at ISA GZFLS?

Admissions Policy: We admit students who we believe will benefit and be successful in our educational programs. Once admitted, all students will be treated on an equitable basis with all other students. Each admission is based on the identified learning and physical challenges of the applicant, the level of professional external and school-based student support available, and the understanding and support provided by parents or guardians.

In order to best serve the interests of applicants, we require a language proficiency test prior to admission into ISA GZFLS to provide baseline data of the student’s language learning capabilities and needs.

Assessment Policy: With the exception of specific language courses, all assessment at ISA GZFLS is conducted in English. Where appropriate, teachers may scaffold learning with translation support or translated key terms in an examination or assessment. In subjects that allow the use of a bilingual dictionary, the school provides this during examinations.

Inclusive Assessment: It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that the specific requirements which are described in the IB Access and Inclusion Policy (Feb 2022) are followed so that we remain compliant with IB processes. Examples of inclusive accommodations that do not require authorization from the IBO include, but are not limited to:

- Extra time
- Use of a calculator, spell check or dictionary
- Readers and scribe

Academic Integrity Policy: The school will apply the same expectations for students regarding academic malpractice no matter which language is being used. Students are expected to adhere to guidelines to prevent academic malpractice as support will be given to ensure they can meet the assessment criteria with integrity. As per the Academic Integrity Policy copying and pasting from translation constitutes plagiarism and academic malpractice.

Whilst we acknowledge that teaching and learning that takes place in a second or additional language is difficult, we also believe that the prevention of academic dishonesty through good practice is preferable to one that merely punishes academic dishonesty.

How is this policy reviewed?

This policy is under continuous review from the ISA GZFLS Leadership Team on an annual basis to ensure current practices are being followed and there is compliance from all stakeholders. The policy is also subject to a detailed review in line with the ISA GZFLS policy review cycle every 2-3 years (dependent on need) incorporating the views of all stakeholders.

Author / Reviewer:	Joe Caruso (Dean of Academic Affairs) Lee Sanders (Executive Principal)
Date of last review:	December 2023
Policy approved by:	Senior Leadership Team
Date of Approval:	December 2023
Date of next Review:	November 2025
Board committee responsible for oversight:	Academic Committee
Board Leader of committee:	Joe Caruso
Date of next review by committee:	November 2025

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- Cummins, J. (1999) *BICS and CALP Clarifying the Distinction*. ERIC Clearinghouse.
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- IBO (2023) *Benchmarking selected IB language courses to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. Retrieved from <https://www.ibo.org/university-admission/support-students-transition-to-higher-education/benchmarking-selected-ib-language-courses-to-the-common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages/>

Appendix A

The findings indicate that DP language courses are comparable to CEFR B2, the level most commonly required by universities. The research therefore provides universities valuable benchmarks for comparing IB student grades against CEFR proficiency levels in Language A and Language B courses in English, French, German and Spanish.

There are common tests that universities ask students to complete in order to demonstrate their language competencies. These tests have been developed with the CEFR in mind or have been benchmarked by other organizations to the CEFR levels. We have collated these findings with the IB results into a chart that will further help universities understand IB grades. A copy of the English chart is below.

English A: literature English A: language and literature		English B		CEFR level	IELTS	TOEFL
HL	SL	HL	SL			
7				C2	9	118–120
					8.5	115–117
6	7	7		C1	8	110–114
	6				7.5	102–109
5	5	6	7	B2+	7	94–101
		5			6	6.5
4	4	5	6	B2	6	60–78
3	3	3 and 4	5	B1+	5.5	46–59
		2	3 and 4		5	35–45
				B1	4.5	32–34

Table 1: Comparison table of English A, English B, CEFR level, IELTS and TOEFL.⁷

Although the subjects and language frameworks in the table above assess English differently, a comparison is helpful in establishing a common understanding of a student's language capabilities. At ISA GZFLS, we recognize that any comparison based on the information above is partial.

⁷ IBO (2023) *Benchmarking selected IB language courses to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*