

MG

MATIJA GUBEC INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

LANGUAGE POLICY



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SCHOOL LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY

Matija Gubec International School, in line with the IB, offers an international education that promotes intercultural understanding and “the ability to communicate in a variety of modes in more than one language¹.” The rich development of language and literacy for all learners is an essential element of the MYP at Matija Gubec International School.

Matija Gubec International School recognizes that language acquisition and development play a crucial role in each student’s personal development. In addition to promoting cognitive growth, language is an important factor in sustaining the student's cultural identity and intercultural understanding. Therefore, MG promotes foreign language and mother tongue learning in addition to English and host language learning.

At Matija Gubec International School, all teachers are language teachers because language learning is present throughout the whole curriculum. We believe the following about language learning and development:

- Student acquire the ability to think and to learn, to develop social skills and values and to acquire knowledge
- Students are encouraged to develop cultural awareness and respect
- Language learning plays a strong role in developing intercultural awareness and international mindedness
- Language learning and teaching should happen at school and at home.

LANGUAGE POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of the Language Policy is to outline the school’s philosophy on language teaching and learning. It states our main beliefs of how we view language in the school community. It states how language should be used in our school and also explains how the teaching and learning of languages is organized. It also shows how students are organized into the most appropriate language pathways to develop their learning.

¹ Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes (IB document); published in 2008

LANGUAGE POLICY ALIGNMENT

Matija Gubec International School language philosophy and policy align with the school's values and policies as outlined below:

... to the school's Mission Statement

Part of our mission statement is “preparing students for an active role as confident, caring, respectful and internationally-minded lifelong learners who are ready to make a positive contribution as global citizens in a changing world.” Part of being a global citizen is learning how to communicate in a variety of ways and part of being respectful of diversity is understanding the world from different points of view: our language policy works to both of these aims because it ensures that students spend a significant amount of time learning an additional language while modelling respect and support for those whose mother tongue is some other than English.

...to IB's principles

Matija Gubec International School Language Policy reflects the MYP concept of communication since the students are required to learn a language in addition to their mother tongue thereby encouraging them to broaden their communication skills. The language policy supports the IB's holistic approach to education as it honours and supports the linguistic background and knowledge of the students and community. Finally, the language policy supports the philosophy of international education nourishing the idea of working across boundaries, cultural and national, to gain an understanding of alternative perspectives.

...to the school's Academic Honesty Policy

Our language policy aligns with our academic honesty policy in that students are supported, where possible, to learn through their mother tongue; this flexibility decreases the pressure students might otherwise feel to copy and paste information from English language sources when conducting research. Instead, students can choose (where possible and appropriate) to work from multilingual sources without feeling badly about doing so.

...to the school's Special Education Needs Policy

Our language policy aligns with our SEN policy in that we require all students to enrol in a language acquisition course unless their Individual Education Plan (IEP) specifies otherwise. An IEP would only suggest otherwise if such a plan were in the best interests of the student under recommendation by relevant specialists.

...to the school's Assessment Policy

Our language policy aligns with our assessment policy because our assessment policy is directly applicable to all of our learners – regardless of their linguistic background. The flexible nature of our assessment policy allows students to communicate their knowledge even when their language skills hinder their understanding of a certain topic.

SCHOOL LANGUAGE PROFILE

Languages of teaching and learning	Language and Literature: English and Croatian Language Acquisition: English, German, French, Italian, Chinese
Languages of communication used in the school and outside the classroom	English
Host language	Croatian
The range of mother tongues in the school community	At the time of writing, the following mother tongues are represented in our student population: Chinese, Croatian, Czech, English, Estonian, Greek, Hungarian, Indonesian, Italian, Kazakh, Macedonian, Persian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovakian, Slovenian, Spanish, and Turkish.

Teaching and learning at Matija Gubec International School is given in the following languages:: English as the language of instruction, Croatian as the host country language and German, French, Italian and Chinese as additional languages offered from grade 5 onward.

The school's Middle Years Programme includes:

- Language and Literature course - English and Croatian
- Language Acquisition course - English, Croatian, German, French, Italian and Chinese.

English is the language of instruction in MYP 0, 1, 2 and 3. All Croatian nationals are obliged to attend the Croatian Language and Literature classes. Croatian nationals and students with prior knowledge of the language are enrolled either in Croatian Language and Literature or Croatian Language Acquisition classes according to the initial testing.

Foreign nationals attend Croatian Language Acquisition classes, Phase 1 or 2. The phases represent a developmental continuum of additional language learning.

Besides Language and Literature and the host language, the student is obliged to choose one of the offered Language Acquisition courses: German, French, Italian and Chinese. If there is a student whose level of English is not sufficient to follow regular classes, they could be excused from attending a second Language Acquisition class. In that case, they are obliged to attend English Language Support (ELS) classes. No student is excused from Croatian language acquisition (host language).

Language of instruction

The language of instruction for all students is English. All school documentation, communication and interaction with parents and students is conducted in English. We understand that all students analyse, comprehend and progress in language at a different pace but developing a fluency in the language of instruction is the end goal for all students.

Host Language

Foreign nationals attend Croatian Language Acquisition classes, Phase 1 or 2. As the host language, Croatian Language Acquisition course is offered in each year of the programme and represented with two lessons per week.

The students are provided with learning opportunities appropriate to their level of ability and background for learning Croatian. Students also have the opportunity to actively use the Croatian language throughout daily interactions with the Croatian students. Teachers from both departments (international and national) plan activities when students work and communicate with each other (Students-To-Students classes, library activities, fund raising, field trips, International Mother Tongue Day, World Storytelling Day, Sport Day and other school events and performances) and seek ways to collaborate in subject areas that they have in common.

Language and Literature

Language and Literature course is generally defined as the student's mother tongue or the language in which they have achieved the level of proficiency close to that of the native speaker.

- **English language policy**

English, being the language of instruction in MYP is offered as one of the two Language and Literature courses. English Language Acquisition course is attended by students whose level of the initial testing corresponds to a particular Phase of Language Acquisition (phase 3, 4 or 5). English Language and Literature and English Language Acquisition course is represented with four lessons per week.

Language learners are either Language Acquisition students or Language and Literature students, and the school's goal is that Acquisition learners should eventually acquire the necessary fluency to join a Language and Literature class. MYP teachers will assign students to classes based on their current language level. When a student joins a Language and Literature class and demonstrates success at this level over an extended period of time, they will no longer be able to return to an Acquisition class.

- **Croatian language policy**

It is the requirement of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia for Croatian nationals to attend Croatian Language and Literature course and for foreign nationals to attend Croatian Language Acquisition course. As a mother tongue, Croatian is offered in each year of the programme: four lessons per week. As the host language, Croatian Language Acquisition course is offered in each year of the programme and represented with two lessons per week.

Language Acquisition

In addition to English and Croatian Language Acquisition courses, students are offered French, Italian, German and Chinese. English is represented with four classes per week. Croatian, French, Italian, German and Chinese classes are represented with two classes per week.

Six phases of language learning

Development of communicative competencies and higher-order cognitive skills

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5	Phase 6
A very limited range of interpersonal and cultural contexts	A limited range of interpersonal and cultural contexts	A limited range of interpersonal and cultural contexts	A range of interpersonal and cultural contexts	A range of interpersonal and cultural contexts	A wide range of interpersonal and cultural contexts
Use basic vocabulary	Use basic vocabulary	Use language accurately	Use language accurately	Use language accurately and effectively	Use oratory technique
Simple short texts	Simple texts	A limited range of texts	A range of texts	A range of texts	A wide range of texts
Interact in simple and rehearsed exchanges	Interact in basic rehearsed and some unrehearsed exchanges	Interact in rehearsed and unrehearsed exchanges	Engage actively	Engage actively	Engage actively

Understand and respond	Understand and respond	Understand and respond	Understand, interpret and respond	Understand, analyse and respond	Understand, analyse, evaluate and respond
Identify and recognize	Recognize and understand	Understand	Understand Construct meaning/ interpret	Construct meaning/ analyse	Evaluate

In English Language Acquisition class the students are grouped into 3 phases of the continuum (3, 4 and 5) after which they are ready to attend the English Language and Literature class. In other Language Acquisition classes (Croatian, Italian, French, German and Chinese) students are placed in small mixed-ability groups which follow the continuum of two phases (1 and 2). Each language is represented with two lessons per week. Students choose their second Language Acquisition course when entering MYP and are required to follow the continuum of the same language until their last year in MYP.

Depending on their prior additional language learning experiences, students may start their MYP Language Acquisition course in any phase of the continuum. Students are placed into phases according to the previous report card comments and achievement levels, information from the application form, teacher's observation and oral interview.

ELS – English Language Support

We provide education to children of many different nationalities whose level of English proficiency varies greatly. Some have no, or very little knowledge of English when they arrive.

ELS programme is organised for students who have limited competence in English and experience difficulties in coping with mainstream lessons in English. These are small groups of students, so their individual needs are met appropriately through targeted language training. The school's ELS programme is provided through a combination of **pull-out** (small group instruction with the English language teacher taking place in parallel to regular classes) and **in-class/inclusion** (additional support in the mainstream class, differentiation based on knowledge, interest, learning styles).

CLS – Croatian Language Support

Croatian Language Support classes are exclusively intended for those students who attend Croatian Language and literature.

Admission and placement – Language level requirements

Upon application, parents complete a student language profile form, which gives school basic information used for student placement. Additionally, new students are tested in English and monitored in the first week after arrival to further determine their level of proficiency in English. All teachers work collaboratively to assess the student's level of active and passive knowledge as well as anticipating possible problems in other non-linguistic subjects. If a student is an ELS candidate, they are placed in the ELS programme. The ELS teacher cooperates with homeroom and subject teachers and enables the student to progress at their level of English as well as to learn subject specific terminology and concepts. They attend ELS classes until the ELS teacher judges that they can normally attend regular classes in English.

Mother Tongue Support

Matija Gubec International School continuously reinforces mother language learning recognising that mother-tongue development is important in students' cognitive development and general performance. The school aims to enable students to retain a positive attitude towards their mother tongue by showing acceptance of cultural identity, and encourages students to continue developing their own knowledge and fluency in their mother tongue.

The school supports mother language learning through offering space (classrooms), resources (technical equipment, books) and schedule flexibility to families and foreign embassies willing to bring in extra mother tongue tutors for the students. The school reinforces other aspects of mother language learning through organizing various events and field trips that support language learning and intercultural understanding. The school also encourages parents to keep up mother-tongue development at home (reading, writing, speaking and audio-visual).

Resources the school library provides for the students' mother tongue

A few years ago the school, with the help of donations from parents, started an international library, which is growing every year. Students are also encouraged to research subjects in their mother tongue, thus, accelerating their acquisition of knowledge and increasing their subject specific vocabulary.

Education in the language and script of national minorities

Members of national minorities are guaranteed the right to education in their language and script as defined by the *Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, Constitutional Law on the Rights*

of National Minorities and the Law on Education in the Language and Script of National Minorities.

Members of national minorities have the opportunity to education in their mother tongue at all levels of education, from pre-school to post-secondary education in the schools of the City of Zagreb.

In a school that teaches the curriculum in language and culture for members of national minorities (Model C: nurturing language and culture; represented with 2-3 lessons per week), in accordance with the *Law on Education in the Language and Script of National Minorities*, student is evaluated - the mother tongue and culture of national minorities numerical grade and the score is entered in the Final Report Card (optional subject).

Differentiation to support language learning

Language learning occurs in every classroom and in every subject group in the MYP because we recognize that language stands at the centre of the many interdependent cognitive, affective, and social factors that shape learning. Because of this reality, teachers attend to the various language needs of their learners. For those whose mother tongue is not English, our main language of instruction, students may receive classroom support through a variety of the differentiation strategies:

- use of visuals
- buddy system for speaking mother tongue
- access to readings in advance
- access to graphic organizers
- adapted tasks so as to make tasks less dependent on large amounts of writing when writing is not the objective
- checks for understanding in ways that require students to respond with more than a yes, or smile and nod because we know that many cultures view this as being polite and respectful despite the respondent's actual lack of understanding
- additional time to complete a task
- where the assessment is not specific to the language, students may respond in their mother tongue or use language aids like dictionaries or translators
- descriptive body language alongside verbal explanations
- tasks designed to empower peers in offering one another feedback
- tasks designed to discourage the reliance on a digital translation software or program
- activation of students' prior understanding, using the mother tongue and other languages when appropriate
- demonstrations of the learning objective or task
- learning structures designed to enable students to work in small, collaborative groups

Arrangements for differentiation to support language learning within the classroom

Differentiation is guided by three characteristics:

- *Differentiation by level of knowledge* where the teachers follow the main principles: concrete to abstract, simple to complex, slow to fast, structured to open-ended, dependent to independent.
- *Differentiation by interest* where teachers follow the main principles: develop efficient ways of sharing interest-based findings, create open invitations for student interest, keep an open eye and open mind for students with a serious passion and link interest-based exploration with key components of the curriculum. Our teachers use different strategies that support interest differentiation.
- *Differentiation by learning profile* principles remind us that some, but not all students share learning preferences - helping students to reflect on their own preferences, use both teacher structured and student-choice avenues to the learning-profile differentiation. The teachers are aware of learning style, intelligence, culture-influenced and gender based preference factors. Teachers use different strategies that support learning-profile differentiation.

Teachers also differentiate content and resources, process and products.

RESOURCES

The course books are provided by the school. The resources used in the language teaching are available at the school library.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

At Matija Gubec International School, all teachers are language teachers because language learning is present throughout the whole curriculum. Since students learn about language and through language, we understand that all teachers are responsible for the language development of students in the school.

Our teaching staff is expected to attend a wide range of required trainings and professional development meetings, such as in-school workshops, regional workshops and conferences organized by the Croatian Education and Teacher Training Agency, as well as professional development events organized by the IB.

The language teachers have a university degree in literature and language that they teach. The language teachers regularly attend IB MYP and other language related conferences and seminars as a part of their life-long professional development. In addition, they individually follow all the latest trends in language teaching.

CURRICULUM

Subject overviews are available to the whole school community.

ASSESSMENT

Continuous assessment to check understanding is an integral part of the language programme. Assessment is carried out according to the IBO guidelines and school's assessment policy. Students are assessed in a variety of ways through both formative and summative assessments. The most frequently used strategy to assess language learning is observation, followed by open-ended tasks, performance assessment, selected responses, peer and self-assessment and the teachers' immediate feedback.

MYP assessment is criterion-based. Croatian and English Language and Literature are assessed according to the Language and Literature criteria. English, Croatian, German, French, Italian and Chinese Language Acquisition are assessed according to the Language Acquisition criteria.

Language and Literature Objectives

The objectives of any MYP subject state the specific targets that are set for learning in the subject. They define what the student will be able to do, or do better, as a result of studying the subject.

A: Analysing

At the end of the course students should be able to:

- identify and comment upon significant aspects of texts
- identify and comment upon the creator's choices
- justify opinions and ideas, use examples, explanations and terminology
- identify similarities and differences in features within and between texts.

B: Organizing

At the end of the course students should be able to:

- employ organizational structures that serve the context and intention
- organise opinions and ideas in a logical manner
- use referencing and formatting tools to create a presentation style suitable to the context and intention.

C: Producing text

At the end of the course students should be able to:

- produce texts that demonstrate thought and imagination while exploring new perspectives and ideas
- make stylistic choices in terms of linguistic, literary, and visual devices, demonstrating awareness of impact on an audience
- select relevant details and examples to support ideas.

D: Using language

At the end of the course students should be able to:

- produce texts that demonstrate thought and imagination while exploring new perspectives and ideas arising from personal engagement within the creative process
- make stylistic choices in terms of linguistic, literary and visual devices, demonstrating awareness of impact on an audience
- select relevant details and examples to support ideas.

Language Acquisition Objectives

The objectives of any MYP subject state the specific targets that are set for learning in the subject. They define what the student will be able to do, or do better, as a result of studying the subject.

A: Comprehending spoken and visual text

This objective encompasses aspects of listening and viewing, and involves the student in interpreting and constructing meaning from spoken and visual text to understand how images presented with oral text interplay to convey ideas, values and attitudes. Engaging with text requires the student to think creatively and critically about what is viewed, and to be aware of opinions, attitudes and cultural references presented in the visual text. The student might, for example, reflect on feelings and actions, imagine himself or herself in another's situation, gain new perspectives and develop empathy, based on what he or she has understood in the text.

The student is expected to be able to:

- listen for specific purposes and respond to show understanding
- interpret visual text that is presented with spoken text
- engage with the text by supporting opinion and personal response with evidence and examples from the text

B: Comprehending written and visual text

This objective encompasses aspects of reading and viewing, and involves the student in constructing meaning and interpreting written and visual text to understand how images presented with written text interplay to convey ideas, values and attitudes. Engaging with text requires the student to think creatively and critically about what is read and viewed, and to be aware of opinions, attitudes and cultural references presented in the written and/or visual text. The student might, for example, reflect on feelings and actions, imagine himself or herself in another's situation, gain new perspectives and develop empathy, based on what he or she has understood in the text.

The student is expected to be able to:

- read for specific purposes and respond to show understanding

- interpret visual text that is presented with written text
- engage with the text by supporting opinion and personal response with evidence and examples from the text.

C: Communicating in response to spoken and/or written and/or visual text

In the language acquisition classroom, students will have opportunities to develop their communication skills by interacting on a range of topics of personal, local and global interest and significance, and responding to spoken, written and visual text in the target language.

The student is expected to be able to:

- interact and communicate in various situations
- express thoughts, feelings, ideas, opinions and information in spoken and written form
- speak and write for specific purposes.

D: Using language in spoken and/or written form

This objective relates to the correct and appropriate use of the spoken and written target language. It involves recognizing and using language suitable to the audience and purpose, for example, the language used at home, the language of the classroom, formal and informal exchanges, social and academic language. When speaking and writing in the target language, students apply their understanding of linguistic and literary concepts to develop a variety of structures, strategies (spelling, grammar, plot, character, punctuation, voice) and techniques with increasing skill and effectiveness.

The student is expected to be able to:

- organize thoughts, feelings, ideas, opinions and information in spoken and written form
- develop accuracy when speaking and writing in the target language.

COMMUNICATION OF THE LANGUAGE POLICY

The language policy is listed with the other school policies on the School's website.

POLICY REVIEW PROTOCOL

Matija Gubec International School Language Policy is a working document. Since language is “not static, a language policy needs to be dynamic and flexible so that it can evolve with the changing needs of the school population.” This policy is reviewed and revised every two years by the Language Department. After the first draft has been made, the policy is sent to parents who have two weeks’ time to send their amendments back to the programme coordinator. The final version is issued after all of the amendments have been taken into consideration and discussed. The policy is available to the whole community via school web-site. The development of our language policy has been and continues to be a collaborative process involving the language teachers, other subject teachers, programme coordinator, head of school, students and the parent community.

References

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