

# Language Policy

## Osaka YMCA International School

Fully Accredited (PK-8) by the Schools Commission of the Western Association of Schools and College



**"An approach to language pedagogy is not just a set of static principles "set in stone". It is, in fact, a dynamic composite of energies within a teacher that changes (or should change, if one is a growing teacher) with continued experience in learning and teaching."**

**(Brown 2002, 11)**

***Standard B1.5a*** :The school has developed and implements a language policy that is consistent with IB expectations.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to share with the OYIS and broader educational community our philosophy underpinning the teaching of language. OYIS provides instruction in English from Preschool to Grade Eight, while valuing the mother tongue, key in forming student identity and supporting language acquisition.

### **Language Philosophy**

Language, the medium of inquiry, is an expression of culture and identity central to children's emotional, social and intellectual development. Furthermore, development of the mother tongue ensures the maintenance of personal identity and enhances development of additional languages. People who command more than one language have global advantages, because language plays a significant role in nurturing understanding and tolerance of other

cultures and perspectives.

We believe that all teachers at OYIS are language teachers and that teachers and parents play a key role in language development. Osaka YMCA International School offers a language education that builds confidence, nurtures creativity and pays attention to multiple intelligences to ensure success for all learners. Our international programme equips children to communicate competently in the world community. At OYIS, we acknowledge that language permeates all subject areas, providing the bedrock for learning. By learning about and through language, we nurture an appreciation of language, its grace and guise across many genres.

## **The Role of English at Osaka YMCA International School**

### **1) Our Practice**

At OYIS the language of instruction is English. Teachers present language through meaningful tasks in authentic contexts. We encourage the development of additive bilingualism at OYIS. With a large majority of English as an Additional Language (EAL) students, each teacher must offer a differentiated programme that takes the language needs of students into account. Language is also integrated across many subjects, and scaffolded to provide just the right level of challenge. Word walls are displayed in every classroom, from Grade One to Grade Eight, to provide students with additional vocabulary support. A variety of opportunities exist for teaching and interrelating reading, writing, listening, speaking, media literacy, and viewing. Social uses of the English language, the common language of inclusion, gains support throughout the school. The physical setting also provides a language rich environment.

By integrating language into every aspect of the curriculum OYIS teaches students the importance of culture, diversity, and caring, which in turn enhances their personal growth, cognitive development, and facilitates international understanding. Through the strong emphasis on language, the school fosters a deep understanding that nurtures lifelong learning. Teachers facilitate parent involvement through the use of parent teacher conferences, the internet forums on the OYIS Community Access site, various informal avenues of communication, newsletters and notes home. For each Unit of Inquiry a request is sent home enlisting the support of parents for the provision of relevant resources, in any language, for classroom use.

### **2) Professional development of teachers**

Professional development is financially supported by the administration, with time allocated in each academic year. Annual possibilities for professional development include the conferences and workshops set up by the following organisations: the International

Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO), the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS), the Japan Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (JASCD), the Japan Council of International Schools (JCIS), and the Tokyo Association of International Preschools (TAIP). We also order Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) publications and inquiry teaching texts for faculty use, have visits to other PYP schools, and teachers attend job-alike sessions and Exhibitions. Our PYP Coordinator also attends periodic meetings of the PYP East Asia Network, and other pertinent IBO PYP workshops in the Asia-Pacific Region.

The two English as an Additional Language (EAL) teachers work collaboratively with the homeroom teachers, so that all instruction stays rooted in the curricular flow of each classroom.

### **3) English Language Support**

#### **Admissions Testing, Levels and Reporting**

The English as an Additional Language (EAL) department has the responsibility of testing incoming students. EAL students are assessed using a standardised language assessment screener from America. In this system, Level One is the lowest level of English ability and Level Four is the highest (moving towards native fluency). They are tested on speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Based on the assessment results, and in consultation with the observation teacher, the students are placed accordingly within in our four-level system. Newcomers who were not tested with the online assessment will then be assessed again in November, using a more extensive standardized language assessment. Any incoming students who score higher than a Level 4 will be designated "OOS" (Out Of Service).

Students in Levels One to Four receive EAL department support and are assessed on a formal and informal basis by the EAL teachers throughout the year. EAL students receive comments from their respective EAL teacher on their report cards.

At the end of the year, all EAL students in Levels One to Four are given an age-appropriate standardised language assessment to determine their new EAL level for the following school year. In addition to the assessment, the EAL teachers consult with the homeroom teacher on a case-by-case basis to get a better academic picture of how each student is accessing the curriculum before assigning the new EAL level. In short, there is a careful evaluation of the child's year-long classroom performance and English development. Results of the assessment will be issued with the school report card. Students placed in Levels One to Four will require support during the next school year.

In Early Childhood, students are admitted without any formal language assessment. Students in Kindergarten B (KB) receive a standardised language assessment at the end of the

year to determine their Grade One entry level into the EAL program.

### **English Language Support**

The English as an Additional Language (EAL) department has the responsibility of supporting all students in Levels One through Four. Activities are scaffolded in all curricular areas to be inclusive of the various language abilities within the classes.

In Early Childhood, language support comes from the homeroom teacher in collaboration with a full-time English speaking assistant in each class.

In Grades One to Nine, students in Levels One to Four pay fees and receive direct additional language support from the EAL teachers. The EAL teachers support them using one of the following methods:

- **Pull-out:** The EAL teacher works with a small group of EAL students in the EAL classroom.
- **Push-in:** The EAL teacher supports the EAL students in accessing a lesson taught by the classroom teacher.
- **Collaborative Co-teaching:** The EAL teacher co-teaches a lesson or leads a smaller group of students alongside the classroom teacher.

### **4) The Role of Japanese at Osaka YMCA International School**

"Applied linguistics and language teachers have become increasingly aware that a second or foreign language can rarely be learned or taught without addressing the culture of the community in which it is used." (Hinkel 1999, 2)

### **Expression of overall purpose**

The primary focus of Japanese at OYIS is communication, whether as a first or additional language. Learning Japanese takes on a special significance as the language of our host nation. Students study Japanese to gain both oral and written communication skills to deal with familiar and practical needs, for future study, and for work and leisure. In addition, through the teaching of Japanese, and through the links to Japanese culture throughout the curriculum, students develop an understanding of the unique perspective and culture of our host nation.

### **Teaching methods and strategies**

A variety of teaching methods and strategies are used at OYIS to teach Japanese. These strategies, in keeping with the pedagogy of the Primary Years Programme, give students practical real-life language skills useful in daily life outside the school. Students grow in confidence through meaningful and authentic listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing tasks.

Japanese is delivered through a topic-based curriculum and one Japanese Unit of Inquiry standing outside the Programme of Inquiry. Whenever possible, links are made to the grade level Units of Inquiry. This is done in collaboration with the homeroom teachers and noted in the Unit of Inquiry planners. The Japanese department strives to promote the IB Learner Profile within the Japanese programme.

### **Programme Structure**

Japanese is taught to instill a lifelong interest in Japanese culture and general interest in language learning. Currently the programme has two levels, one level is for students who are beginning or intermediate in the Japanese Language, and the other level is for students with native or near-native Japanese ability. It is taught by qualified Japanese language teachers. Three Japanese classes are taught per week for all students from Grades One through Five. For junior high school, the classes are divided between native and non-native Japanese speakers.

New students entering the school are given a placement test based on decoding skills, reading comprehension, writing, listening and speaking. An observation of the student is also included in the screening process. At the beginning of each school year, all students are given the placement test again to determine their level. The students are then placed into a Japanese leveled class at their grade level. The students receive ongoing formative assessment, quizzes, and oral interviews throughout each term. Parents are informed of their child's progress twice a year on the school report card, portfolios, and Parent-Teacher conferences.

### **The Role of Mother Tongue Language at Osaka YMCA International School**

**"Our concept of development implies a rejection of the frequently held view that cognitive development results from the gradual accumulation of separate changes. We believe that child development is a complex dialectical process characterized by periodicity, unevenness in the development of different functions, metamorphosis or qualitative transformation of one form into another, intertwining of external and internal factors, and adaptive processes which overcome impediments that the child encounters." (Vygotsky cited in Daniels 2008, 34)**

## **Expression of overall purpose**

OYIS recognises the crucial importance of students developing and maintaining literacy in their mother tongue, whether that be Japanese or any other language, for both personal and educational development. This will support them as they become literate members of their own community and provide the key to re-entering that community to resume their education at any point. OYIS, via donations, has copies of books in several languages spoken as mother tongues by our students in the library as part of the permanent collection.

Furthermore, the faculty of OYIS begins each Unit of Inquiry by making a formal request to parents for any related text or media that may support the instruction. Through this means, numerous books and viewing resources in various mother tongues enter each classroom for the duration of the unit to supplement the English instruction. Guest speakers are also invited to speak, and students or office personnel may assist in translation.

## **Works Cited**

Brown, H. Douglas (2002) "English Language Teaching in the "Post-Method" Era: Toward Better Diagnosis, Treatment, and Assessment" ***Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice***. Jack C. Richards and Willy A. Renandya editors. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Daniels, Harry (2008) ***Vygotsky and Research***. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Hinkel, Eli, ed. (1999) ***Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning***. New York: Cambridge University Press