International School Rheintal

Language Policy

Reviewed November 2016

International School Rheintal
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Table of Contents

Table of Contents **2**

International School Rheintal Mission **3**

International School Rheintal Language Policy **4**

ISR Language Philosophy 4

Assessment 7

Multilingualism **9**

Lingua francas and world Englishes 9

Practices 9

Listening and Speaking 10

Admissions 12

Diploma Programme English Language Requirements and Recommendations 13

Professional Development 13

Library **14**

Support Document for Parents **14**

Fostering Language Acquisition in Your Child 15

How can you support the linguistic development of your child? 15

Talking and telling stories 15

ISR Guiding Statements

International School Rheintal Vision

ISR is the school of choice in the Alpen Rheintal region providing a high quality international education in English for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12, inspiring international-mindedness, academic and personal excellence and responsible engagement.

Reviewed June 2023

International School Rheintal Mission

ISR is a supportive, challenging and student-centered environment. We encourage each student to reach their potential whilst promoting international-mindedness, empathy and life-long learning. Through teamwork and individual endeavours, members of the school community should:

- Respect and take responsibility for themselves, others and the environment
- Appreciate and respect diversity
- Think critically
- Reflect thoughtfully
- Communicate effectively
- Celebrate success

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International School Rheintal Language Policy

ISR Language Philosophy

As language is fundamental to all learning, all teachers at ISR are actively involved in teaching language and are trained accordingly. ISR provides a high quality education in English, while encouraging mother tongue development. German is promoted as the school's second language and French is taught as a foreign language, (recognising that it is a language of the host country). In order to enrich personal growth and enhance international understanding, students should express knowledge and ideas confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. ISR creates a supportive and inclusive environment where students can successfully develop their multiple language proficiencies. ISR nurtures and appreciates a diversity of languages as a way of knowing and means of expression for lifelong learners.

IB Perspective

The IB offers three high-quality and challenging educational programmes for a worldwide community of schools, aiming to create a better, more peaceful world through the development of intercultural understanding and international-mindedness. Crucial for the success of the programmes is a rich development of language and multiliteracies for all learners. The ability to communicate in a variety of modes in more than one language is essential to the concept of an international education that promotes intercultural perspectives. IB programmes offer a variety of opportunities for the development of multilingualism, recognizing that:

- Multilingual classrooms are increasingly the norm
- The language profiles of IB students are diverse
- Sometimes one language may be more dominant than another in the same individual. (IB, 2011)

School Language Profile

The language of instruction at ISR is English, but many of our students are not native English speakers. The region we live in is German speaking and many of our students are fluent in German; others are just beginning to learn it or have only been learning it for a year or two.

Some students speak High German or Swiss German fluently at home but may have been living in a country where German was not an official language and so until coming to ISR they may not have read or written extensively in German. A number of our students do not have either English or German as their best language and speak one and sometimes even two other languages at home. With this complex language situation in our school population, language learning is an important part of our curriculum – with English being our priority.

Roles of Language

In the case of the IB Programmes, 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. (IB, 2011)

At ISR language refers to:

- **English:** the language of instruction
- **EAL:** English as an additional language
- **German:** the language of the host country and immediate environment
- **French:** taught as a foreign language
- **First Language/ Mother Tongue:** the language(s) most frequently spoken in the home
- **Language A** a language which students have previous experience of using, referred to as Language and Literature in MYP and DP
- **Language B** a language which a student has limited or no experience of using, referred to as Language Acquisition in MYP and DP
- **ab initio language** used in the IB Diploma programme only – a language which a student has very limited or no experience of using

English, the Language of Instruction

ISR students experience an enriched language immersion education in which English is the primary language of instruction and social interaction. All subjects (other than language classes) are delivered in English. The Primary and Middle Years Programmes (PYP & MYP) are suitable for students with a variety of English levels, from native speakers to those with very little or no knowledge of English. A high level of English language proficiency in cognitive, academic language is a linguistic goal of the curriculum. English as an Additional Language (EAL) support is provided as necessary. Students entering the Diploma Programme (DP), however, must already be proficient in English. (See Admissions section)

In the MYP and DP, English is offered as Language A. Please refer to the appropriate IB Subject Guides for more information on Language A curricula.

It is the goal of the school to educate students to become highly competent and fluent speakers, readers and writers of English, the school expects students to work hard to achieve this goal. Parents are also expected to support their children through this process.

It is recognized that fluency in English is at least partly dependent on the amount of time and the variety of situations in which English is used. Therefore the expectation is that all students, faculty and administration will use English as the primary language of communication on campus, including for the purpose of social interaction. English is the language of inclusion at the school.

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

ISR strives to create a supportive, non-threatening and inclusive environment where students can succeed in enhancing their English language proficiency. A support system is established to ensure success, in both academic and social contexts, for all students learning English. Non-native English speakers may need to put in extra effort and may require extra support in order to achieve their academic potential. New students and their families are integrated into the school quickly. All families are encouraged to share their languages and cultures with the school community.

The EAL programme provides support and periodic evaluation. The type of support students receive in the EAL programme is determined through regular collaboration between the EAL and classroom teachers. In the classroom, the EAL teacher may assist students individually or in small groups in order to fully explain the tasks at hand and to help conduct them. The EAL teacher may also lead or co-teach lessons with the classroom teacher. Classroom visits help the EAL teacher determine the immediate needs of the student while identifying specific strategies to work on to help the students learn best in their classrooms.

Some students in the EAL programme are withdrawn from their classes at times, depending on their needs. A holistic and balanced approach is used by integrating the strands of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The students perform tasks and engage in activities to help them become familiar with basic vocabulary that is of everyday use to them.

Additional lessons may be recommended when a child does not seem to be making appropriate satisfactory progress in learning English. Individual tuition can be arranged by the school; there will be costs involved. This can be organized on an eight week rotating basis.

ISR recognizes that learning a second language is not the same as learning a native language. Most children develop their first language at approximately the same rate; few children do so in their second language. Therefore, parents need not be concerned if their child is not learning English as quickly as some other children.

We realize that students who join the school with very limited or no English cannot be expected to participate as fully as native speakers. The class and subject teachers modify their expectations for these EAL students and may also differentiate the students' tasks. Strategies may include using unit vocabulary lists, allowing use of electronic translators, giving sentence starters and modeling structure. As the EAL child gains fluency in English, the teacher's expectations rise to reflect the child's growing knowledge and use of English.

Assessment

At ISR, non-fluent English speakers are given a standardized assessment at the beginning of each academic year or upon initial entrance to the school. This test is used to help determine which students would benefit from EAL support and to measure individual student's progress learning English over time. The results of this assessment are shared with staff and parents and they are kept on file for each student.

The assessment, called the Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey, consists of four sections, two of which measure students' oral language ability (vocabulary knowledge) and two that measure their reading-writing ability. An average of the age-normed scores from these four tests is taken to indicate the level of the student's broad English ability. This level ranges from 1 (Negligible) to 5 (Fluent). Once a student has reached a level of 4 or above, indicating English fluency, the assessment is no longer administered.

If a student receives extensive EAL support during the year, a description of progress in this area will be included in the bi-annual student reports.

German, the language of the host country

ISR strives to make every student proficient in at least two languages. All ISR students will have the knowledge of and the ability to use, both English and German, but not all of them to the same extent. During students' time at the school, some will achieve functional proficiency in German while others will become truly bilingual. The acquisition of language must be seen as a continuum along which each individual student progresses at his/her own speed. Since ISR is primarily an English-language school the German for advanced speakers programme

does not correspond exactly to German taught in German-language schools. At ISR German is not augmented by teaching the whole curriculum in this language. Therefore our programme does not encompass the depth and breadth that exists in a German-language school.

The school offers additional German classes before or after school for one hour per week for advanced speakers in grades 1 to 10. These classes are not an official part of our program and focus primarily on Grammar. Attendance at these classes is voluntary; however, students who sign up for these classes should attend each time they are on throughout the whole year. It may be necessary to cancel lessons if the teachers have other commitments in the school at the time of the lessons, for example, a field trip.

ISR offers German from Kindergarten 1 through Grade 12. In the PYP, starting from Grade 1, students are divided into two classes by ability levels—beginner to intermediate and advanced to native speakers. Performing Arts in the PYP from Grades 1 to 6 is taught in both English and German, with parents having the option to decide the language of instruction for their child. German is offered as both Language A and Language B in the MYP; later it is offered as both a Group 1, Studies in Language and Literature, and Group 2, Language Acquisition, in the DP.

French, an additional language of the school

ISR offers French language classes in addition to English, the language of instruction, and German, the second language of the school. French is offered for Grades 5-10 and is taught as a Language B. As such, our French courses are not for native speakers of French. Entering students may have varied backgrounds and be at foundation, standard or advanced levels. The aims and objectives of learning French as an additional language therefore differ from the aims and objectives of learning English and German. This means that, while we aim for each student to reach his or her highest level of literacy and proficiency in French, we do not necessarily aim for language proficiency in French. Native speakers of French have the option of taking French as a School Supported Self-Taught Language A in the DP.

Native French speakers cannot be catered for in the French classes. Native French speakers may need to work in the library or another assigned space during French classes.

In Grades 9 and 10 French is optional and students may choose to take Design instead. Students who start at the school in Grade 9 or 10 and who have limited or no French must take Design instead of French.

First Language, the language(s) most frequently spoken at home

The development of the first language (mother tongue language) is crucial for maintaining cultural identity, personal growth and international understanding and is essential for the acquisition of additional languages.

ISR encourages parents to support the maintenance and development of the mother tongue and encourages students to use and advance their mother tongue. Native German speakers are particularly catered for at ISR, as German for native speakers is offered from Kindergarten 1 through Grade 12. **S**tudents whose mother tongue is not English or German have the option in the DP of taking their mother tongue as a School Supported Self-Taught Language A.

Multilingualism

Lingua francas and world Englishes

It is most important to address the fact that a majority of the students, will have another mother tongue or first language as a resource to be maintained and developed. Often, the main language of instruction in a school will be a second language for many of the students and this must be taken into account in pedagogy and teacher professional development across all three IB programmes. Students learning in a language other than their mother tongue should no longer be framed as a 'problem'. Isolating English as a Second Language (ESL) students from the mainstream, in an attempt to teach them the language they need separately from the subject areas, is not a practice that honours multilingualism. Good practice should adhere to the principles of good pedagogy for language teaching across the whole curriculum.

Languages such as English are now important for multilingual communities to be able to communicate in a globalized world. Various forms of English – sometimes called International English Languages (IEL) – have become the current dominant global languages. (IB, 2011)

Practices

In accordance with IB requirements the pedagogical approach to learning should:

- Be open and inclusive
- Affirm each learner's identity and autonomy
- Promote critical thinking.

(IB, 2011)

At ISR, language is seen as a trans-disciplinary element throughout the curriculum – meaningful, in context and purposeful. Language is used for information processing and creative problem solving. Language is primarily taught through classroom units of study. It is supported with structured lessons that provide the children with the skills and strategies necessary to challenge and develop their understanding of concepts. Below are specific language practices which may be used at ISR in the PYP, MYP and DP.

Listening and Speaking

- Students are given many opportunities to listen and speak in order to communicate effectively, and to establish and maintain relationships.
- Students are supported in their learning during the communication process by a variety of methods, such as scaffolding, language accompanying actions, building on to what other students say, and guided questioning.
- Students are taught to coherently structure ideas and arguments in a logical way and are supported with relevant examples.
- An awareness of the need for an effective choice of register suited to the audience in oral communication is fostered.

Reading and Literature

- The school and classroom libraries are kept up to date with books catering for the units of inquiry.
- Literature is an integral part of the curriculum and is used as a means of understanding and exploring.
- Books, in both print and electronic format, are read for enjoyment and can also be discussed, analyzed, compared and contrasted.
- There is buddy reading between different age/grade groups. (PYP)
- There is regular timetabled DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) time in the PYP.
- Students learn how to understand, interpret and respond to the ideas, attitudes and feelings expressed in various texts.
- Students are encouraged to think critically about what they read; and to be able to make predictions and inferences based on information that is both explicit and implicit in a text.
- Reading is selected according to both ability and interest levels.
- There are both student-selected and teacher-directed reading materials.
- World classics are available for reading.
- Culturally diverse reading material is available.

- Students are shown how to understand and comment on the language, content, structure, meaning and significance of both familiar and previously unseen pieces of writing.
- Glossaries of Terms are made available to students.
- Students are encouraged to read outside the standard curriculum to improve their vocabulary and knowledge of technical jargon.

Writing

- Writing is a significant activity in classes of all ages. The writing process involves creating an environment where students can acquire the skills necessary to produce written products for a variety of purposes (formal, informal, personal, reflective, informative, persuasive, poetic, or in the form of a story or dialogue).
- When learning to write, students are encouraged to focus on meaning at first rather than accuracy. They are given the opportunity to enjoy the writing process and students are encouraged to take risks in language learning.
- Students engage in spontaneous writing.
- The writing processes are taught and practiced.
- A range of independent spelling strategies are developed.
- Students are taught to coherently structure ideas and arguments in a logical way and are supported with relevant examples.
- Students are exposed to a variety of written genres.
- An awareness of the need for an effective choice of register suited to the audience in written communication is fostered.

First Language Development

- Parents are encouraged to foster Mother tongue language development – see support document for parents – Fostering Language Acquisition in Your Child.
- Students new to English may initially present new learning in their mother tongue.
- Cooperative activities and discussions are common to optimize development of all the students' languages.
- Students are encouraged to use books in their own language for project work.
- Mother tongue classes may be part of the programme.
- The library has a collection of books in the various mother tongues spoken at the school.
- The library identify on-line books/resources in various mother tongues spoken at the school.

Explicit Language Instruction

- An understanding of appropriate and varied ranges of vocabulary and idioms is fostered.
- Correct grammar with appropriate and varied sentence structure is taught.

Information Technology

- Our classrooms are connected to the broader world through technology: students research and communicate not only through printed media, but also through global electronic networks, in order to access a vast range of multimedia resources.
- Students are taught to read and research using multimedia resources

Support Services

- Additional-language teachers play a particularly important role in reinforcing, supporting and extending the classroom work.

Admissions

Students with no English language skills are accepted throughout the Primary and Middle Schools and will be supported through our EAL programme. Students entering Grade 11 to take the IB Diploma must be proficient in English. This will be assessed by the IB Coordinator and the English teachers based on the student's ability to write a 500 word essay from a choice of 3 titles, and after personal interaction with the student.

Additional costs may be incurred if a student is admitted with little or no English and, if required, intensive EAL support is given. The student may also be asked to take a suitable intensive English course outside school hours if this is considered necessary. (Also please see English as an Additional Language (EAL) p.2.)

An initial assessment of English language skills will be done on entry into the school; however, this is used to ascertain what level of EAL support is needed and is not used to determine if a child will be admitted to the school (with the exception of Grade 11 in which English proficiency is an entrance requirement).

Students receiving EAL support will be formally assessed each semester to allow staff to determine the appropriate level of on-going support. Informal assessments are given continuously and in context to monitor student progress.

Once a student is admitted, the EAL team will generate an individual language profile. This will be renewed regularly until the student is considered fluent in English and no longer in need of EAL support.

English language proficiency will not decide grade placement and students will not be placed at a lower grade level because of lack of English skills.

Diploma Programme English Language Requirements and Recommendations

The IB Diploma Program at ISR is taught in English with the exception of German A/B and Language A Self-Study. Group 1 English Language A: Language and Literature, either at higher or standard level, is a required course at ISR unless a student takes a language A self-study. Therefore, it is essential that students develop strong English language skills in order to reach their potential in the Diploma Program.

MYP Grade 10 students upon the referral of the English teacher(s), and new students to the Diploma Program whose mother tongue is not English will be tested in all areas of the Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey-Revised. Students who do not reach the 'fluent' level will be required to attend English support lessons during Grade 11. At the end of Grade 11 they would be retested. The Counselor and the DP coordinator, in consultation with the English teacher(s) will determine whether further English support lessons are required in Grade 12. English support lessons may take place outside of normal school hours.

The intention of these requirements is to reinforce ISR's commitment to 'high quality education in English' therefore encouraging students throughout ISR to actively improve their English Language knowledge and skills.

Professional Development

At ISR all teachers are considered to be language teachers. Training and support in the teaching of language will be provided to all teachers. Such training will form part of the school's overall professional development plan and may take the form of an in-school course such as *ESL in the Mainstream* or some form of appropriate external training. Teachers will have the opportunity to receive such training in the first two years of teaching at ISR. New

teachers will have specific EAL professional development as part of their initial orientation training prior to the start of the school year.

Library

ISR will continue to build up a collection of books, magazines and media, which support teaching and learning across the 3 programmes, in the languages taught at ISR. Age appropriate books for EAL students are available. The school is also committed to building up a collection of books in the various mother tongues spoken at the school.

Children are encouraged to read books in their own mother tongue as well as the languages of instruction of the school.

For further information regarding languages in IB schools refer to the IB document 'Language and learning in IB Programmes' (2011).

Support Document for Parents

Fostering Language Acquisition in Your Child

Many parents are concerned about their children and the languages they are learning. We would like to give you some information and a few helpful hints concerning language acquisition.

It is easy for your child to learn more than one language. Research has shown that children are able to learn two (or more) languages at an early age as long as they are actively supported in both languages.

It is important to actively use a language with your child. This can be done through playing games, having conversations, singing songs, saying nursery rhymes, reading picture books and telling stories.

With your own child you should use the language which comes naturally for you, the language which you speak best. This is the language in which you know the most words and you also know how the sentences are constructed. This is very important for your child. Having a good foundation in their mother tongue will make it easier to learn other languages.

It takes many years until a child speaks a language really well – this is true for the first language, but also for all other languages a child might learn.

The family is very important for language development because children learn their first language within the family. If children feel at home in their first language and have a chance to use it as much as possible, the learning other languages and learning in school will be easier.

How can you support the linguistic development of your child?

Talking and telling stories

Language develops on a daily basis – for instance, when children listen to others and when they speak themselves. Language develops when children play or when they look at books, it develops at meal times or in conversations with people the children love. Daily conversations with your children are very important. Children learn best when they feel at home and when they are not afraid of making mistakes. It is not good for your child's linguistic development if you constantly correct 'wrong' expressions. There is a danger that children who get corrected all the time will no longer enjoy expressing themselves. Certain activities are particularly suited to develop your children's linguistic potential to the fullest – reading to your children, sharing books, singing songs or teaching nursery rhymes.

Sharing books/reading materials with your child

For the development of language in young children it is very important that parents look at picture books with their children, if possible every day. Research has shown that sharing picture books with a child and talking about the pictures (in your own language) teaches the child many different things, which will help him/her in all other languages and in school. Older children also benefit from reading books on a regular basis, also if possible every day. Children should have access to age-appropriate reading material in a variety of genres – magazines, fiction, non-fiction, comics. On-line books and resources are available in many languages. Take advantage of this and look at these with your child.

Watching films/listening to stories

Watching films and speaking about them or listening to stories can be conducive to language learning. Older children may benefit from watching a film with the sub-titles.

Children who grow up speaking more than one language possess a treasure which will be a great advantage in their lives.

Modified from
How can your child learn 2 languages, German and our own language?
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