

# Language Policy

## List of abbreviations

IB	International Baccalaureate
PYP	Primary Years Programme
MYP	Middle Years Programme
DP	Diploma Programme
ELA	English Language Acquisition, general English support programme
ENLL	English Language and Literature, MYP & DP subject
ENLA	English Language Acquisition, MYP subject (for DP this is English B)
DULL	Dutch Language and Literature, MYP & DP subject
DULA	Dutch Language Acquisition, MYP subject (for DP this is Dutch B)
DUAb	Dutch Ab Initio DP Subject
SPLA	Spanish Language Acquisition, MYP subject (for DP this is Spanish B)
SPAb	Spanish Ab Initio, MYP & DP IB subject
SSST	School Supported Self Taught
SAA	Service as Action, MYP curriculum component

## Mission beliefs and purpose

### Mission

*A community learning for world citizenship*

*The International School Utrecht is an IB World School, offering a complete and connected International Baccalaureate programme for students from 4-18 from diverse international backgrounds. We continuously strive for academic excellence in the delivery of this programme. Our mission statement consists of four equally important pillars.*

*We are a close-knit and welcoming **community** of students, staff and parents. We all approach life from a different culture and background and with the languages we know. We find each other in our common goal: to create a stimulating learning environment in which everyone feels at home. We strive to be culturally competent; we are grounded in our own cultures, yet curious about others.*

*We communicate across cultures, using **music** to form strong bonds. That is why we offer an exciting music programme accessible to all students and connected to the rich music tradition of the city of Utrecht.*

*We give special attention to the **physical and social environment** we learn an work in. We value and care for the natural world and model responsible behaviour. Our learning environment is one in which every person can express themselves safely and freely.*

*We use technology in an innovative and sensible way to enhance our teaching and learning. We equally appreciate the value of sensory and tactile experiences. We approach the **virtual and real world** as one, behaving consistently as we are moving from one to the other.*

*We are a community of life-long learners*

### Language learning: a priority

The acquisition of more than one language and maintenance of the mother tongue enrich personal growth and help facilitate international mindedness and understanding. In our school community, we aim to foster in students the ability to think and express themselves with precision, clarity, confidence and imagination in at least two languages. Since language is a powerful tool, we strive to challenge students linguistically, and encourage them to follow a language programme that will stretch their language skills, is appropriate to their background and suited to their future plans. Thus, Dutch classes are part of the curriculum as early as Kindergarten, since students should be able to interact with the Dutch environment around them as early as possible. In addition to this, all students, including those who are not yet proficient in English, are encouraged to take all subjects across all programmes. Finally, at Diploma Programme (DP) level, we encourage students to obtain a Bilingual Diploma whenever possible. Where appropriate, we support students taking a self-taught, school-supported

### Learning languages provides the students an opportunity to:

- expand their view of the world.
- develop in social contexts, liaising with others
- encourage critical reflection on the relation between language and culture, language and thought.
- expand opportunities for meaningful leisure activities (such as travel, film, other media)
- develop their intellect (encouraging good learning habits, memorization, combining course content and skills in a meaningful way).
- improve knowledge of the mother tongue (through comparison and contrast with the language).
- help to build practical skills that may be used in other disciplines.
- foster their understanding of the interrelation between language and human nature.
- teach and encourage respect for other ethnic groups.
- increase their sense of self worth.

## Language development: a shared responsibility.

The language policy supports the shared responsibility of all community members, teachers, students and parents, for the language development of **all** students. To achieve this, all teachers and students are encouraged to become active language learners, and all teachers are language teachers within their subject.

## Language profile

### ISUtrecht Language profile

Many students have a language other than English as their mother tongue. The school has a diverse student and teaching body, representing 30 different nationalities. All staff speak English and most are fluent in at least one other language.

### Purpose of the language policy

This policy is intended to provide an overview of language learning at ISUtrecht. It is written in line with the principles and practices of the International Baccalaureate (IB). The policy outlines our school's linguistic and academic goals, and defines a language programme, which is designed to help our students attain these goals through authentic contexts in a culturally rich and diverse environment.

## Language programmes overview

### Pedagogy

ISUtrecht provides a challenging, rigorous and open intercultural learning environment that has language as its core.

Language learning at ISUtrecht follows a whole language approach. Our language teaching:

- is integrated in all other areas of learning, and
  - is achieved through authentic learning experiences, ie. rooted in real-life contexts from kindergarten to DP.
- Language is integrated into all areas of the curriculum and every teacher within the school is considered a language teacher.

The academic language at ISUtrecht is English, which is taught through a full immersion approach. This means that all our students are immersed in an English learning environment from the day they join us, including students who still are not proficient in English. Full immersion allows students to develop their language skills at a faster pace, while continuing to be challenged academically at an age appropriate level.

To aid students in this transition, we offer an English Language Acquisition programme (ELA). This programme provides additional support to address the particular academic challenges faced by those students who are learning in a language other than their mother tongue. It is designed to be integrated in the conceptual learning that takes place throughout the curriculum, and endeavours to draw on students' own cultural and linguistic heritage.

Details of the language teaching pedagogy at PYP, MYP and DP levels are outlined in the table in [Appendix A](#)

### Assessment

While language acquisition follows distinct stages, students' rate of acquisition varies greatly from individual to individual. Therefore, language teachers assess all language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) regularly. Teachers differentiate through scaffolding or task extension as required. Formative and summative assessments in the classroom provide information on language growth, and are modified and differentiates as appropriate.

Students who are identified as requiring additional support in English to access the curriculum will be placed in the ELA programme. In the PYP students remain part of the ELA Programme until they are able to participate fully and independently in classroom learning. In the MYP students will follow English Language Acquisition (ENLA) as a dedicated subject.

At DP level, due to the challenging nature of the course, students are expected to have the levels of English necessary to succeed (For more information, please view the Admissions Policy).

## English, Dutch and Mother tongue programmes

All students are required to study a language and literature course. In the PYP this is English, and the curriculum is designed to develop literacy skills in this language to the appropriate levels. In the MYP ISUtrecht offers two language and literatures courses: English Language and Literature (ENLL) and Dutch Language and Literature (DULL). These two choices are also offered at DP level, where there is also the opportunity of taking other mother tongue studies as a self-taught, school supported literature course (SSST). ISUtrecht believes that developing a child's mother tongue can accelerate the rate of English language acquisition, support achievement in all subject areas, develop confident, independent learners, and enhance intercultural understanding and international-mindedness.

### English (ENLL)

In the PYP English literacy skills are taught following the practices outlined in [Appendix A](#). When students begin the MYP or DP programmes, they may study English Language and Literature if their skills in all four language areas (reading, writing, listening and speaking) enable them to access this curriculum.

### Dutch (DULL)

In the PYP students study Dutch as language acquisition from kindergarten. However, carefully planned differentiation within the lesson, and the use of a range of both teacher-directed and self-study materials, allow students with Dutch as their mother tongue to be challenged to an age appropriate level.

In the MYP and DP programmes, native Dutch speakers with the appropriate proficiency in the language will continue to study Dutch following the language and literature course. Other students who have reached native language proficiency in Dutch may also study Dutch Language and Literature at MYP and DP levels. Students who are native speakers but have not yet achieved the necessary to join the language and literature course will join the Dutch Language Acquisition course (DULA) in view of potentially transitioning to DULL during the course of the programme.

Students who complete the Dutch Language and Literature courses at MYP and DP level will have the necessary skills to access Dutch universities.

### Mother tongue

The development of the students' mother tongue is the best medium for acquiring knowledge; it is a key factor in fostering balanced, self-confident multilingual students. Therefore, mother tongue development opportunities are offered to students from kindergarten to grade 12, both during and out of lesson time. Mother Tongue programmes at ISUtrecht are outlined in [Appendix B](#).

### ELA support: in class, parallel teaching, pull-out & ENLA.

In accordance with our whole language approach, English language learners who do not yet have the levels of English required to follow the curriculum are placed in the age appropriate, mainstream classroom with the other students. In this way, they are encouraged to work with their peers and participate in learning activities. To support them, they take part in the ELA programme and receive extra support from qualified staff on a regular basis. ISUtrecht accepts that there is a transition period of up to 1 year and that in this time the student is given the time and space to transition mentally, emotionally and linguistically to the new environment – the actual time for this transition will vary from case to case. At the end of that transition period, if a student is still struggling significantly, then the class teacher and ELA support staff will discuss the necessity and/or provision of further support. Both in the PYP and MYP, English language support is kept dynamic in structure so it can adapt to the changes in the student body as a whole and to individual students' needs.

The sole exception to this pattern is kindergarten, where children develop age appropriate literacy skills in English by being fully immersed in a play-based, experientially rich learning environment. For this reason, additional English language tuition by specialists is not appropriate at this stage.

### Primary Years Programme

From grade one to grade five, each class is allotted a specific number of ELA support periods in which ELA staff will support the learning of the students. These sessions preferably take place during language and literacy periods. It includes a mixture of 'first aid' focus sessions for absolute beginners, in class support and parallel teaching; the class teacher and ELA teacher liaise continuously to adapt and modify the support as the needs of the students change over the course of the year.

### Middle Years Programme

Students are placed in either the ENLA or the ENLL class. When assigned to the ENLA class, it is the intention that students reach phase 4 and then join the ENLL course (see MYP ENLA criteria for details on phases).

## Diploma Programme

In DP students unable to access the English A programme, can take the language B (Language Acquisition) Programme.

## Language acquisition programme: Dutch and other languages

As mentioned in section I above, in the PYP all students will learn Dutch as an additional language from kindergarten to grade 5. All students in the MYP will take at least 2 additional languages up to grade 10 level in addition to English:

- students with Dutch as a mother tongue will take Dutch Language and Literature (DULL, see section IV above) and Spanish language acquisition (SPLA)
- students who do not have Dutch as a mother tongue will take both Language Acquisition Dutch (DULA) and Spanish (SPLA).

In the MYP, Language Acquisition courses are taught in six phases and students are assessed according to the Language Acquisition Assessment Criteria for MYP Years 1-5.

### Dutch Language Acquisition (DULA)

Dutch language acquisition starts at kindergarten level. In the PYP all students receive Dutch as an additional language from the age of 4 years old. These lessons include language and culture of the Netherlands.

In the MYP, all students receive Dutch, either as language acquisition or language and literature. The DULA programme is designed to develop the different communicative competences (reading, viewing-listening, speaking, writing and critical literacy). Students acquire knowledge and language skills in different contexts (personal, public, educational and occupational). Both subjects include language and culture of the Netherlands. At DP level, the school offers Dutch Language Acquisition (Dutch B) as well as the Dutch Language and Literature course (Dutch A).

### English Language Acquisition (English B)

For some students in Diploma Programme, English B is a good option, when there is an alternative group 1 language. The English B LA programme is designed to develop the different communicative competences (reading, viewing-listening, speaking, writing and critical literacy). Students acquire knowledge and language skills in different contexts (personal, public, educational and occupational).

### Spanish Language Acquisition (SPLA and SPAb)

ISUtrecht offers Spanish from grade 6 to grade 12. The SPLA programme is designed to develop the different communicative competences (reading, viewing-listening, speaking, writing and critical literacy). Students acquire knowledge and language skills in different contexts (personal, public, educational and occupational). During the course, students become aware of the diversity of Spanish speaking countries and their linguistic and cultural heritages, while reflecting on their own mother tongue and cultural heritage. Students who join the school in the higher grades with no Spanish join a Spanish Language Acquisition (Spanish B). Spanish is also offered at beginner level, Spanish Ab-initio course (SPAb), which requires no previous exposure to the language.

## Student and parent community involvement

ISUtrecht believes that the language development of **all** students should be a shared responsibility of all community members, teachers, students and parents.

### Parental involvement

Parents are an integral part of our community of learners and can provide necessary support for language learning. At the moment, parents volunteer in the classroom, support extracurricular activities, and run mother tongue development clubs. They are particularly essential in supporting mother tongue development, not only through extracurricular activities, but especially at home. Since parents are our very own mother tongue experts at home, they can provide help and we rely on their support to ensure that their children continue to develop their mother tongue skills to the age appropriate levels. In view of this, we encourage parents to focus on mother tongue development at home, and avoid privileging English language development over their home language. We ask parents to use their mother tongue consistently at home, providing as many mother tongue experiences as possible for their child. Teachers can provide parents with the current topic of study, learner outcomes and unit vocabulary, so parents can discuss these outcomes in the mother tongue at home.

### Student involvement

Students are also actively involved in helping the language development of our community. As part of their Service

As Action (SAA) and Creativity, Activity and Service (CAS), MYP students are encouraged to use their language skills to support their peers or younger students, either with the development of English or their shared mother tongue. Many works as English Language or mother tongue buddies with PYP students, and organise mother tongue clubs or language lessons.

# Appendix A - Language Learning: Whole Language Approach

Whole language is when language is taught through authentic learning experiences, with a focus on building meaning and teaching the processes of communication. Language aspects (such as phonics, spelling, grammar and punctuation) are not taught in isolation but through the reading and writing. At ISUtrecht, we follow this approach to teach language to all students, whether new to English or not.

Whole language is:

- integrating literacy into other areas of the curriculum, especially math, science, and social studies, and the arts;
- focusing on creating meaning in reading and expressing meaning in writing;
- emphasising students' interpretations of text and free expression of ideas in writing as the most effective way for students to build knowledge.
- incorporating the writing process, which focuses on individual students' language needs. The writing process requires students to plan, draft, revise/edit and re-draft.
- reading and writing for real purposes; emphasis on high-quality and culturally-diverse literature;
- frequent reading: with students in small guided reading groups; to students with read-a-louds; by students independently;
- emphasising how phonics, grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentences structures are essential in building meaning. This is done by exploring and creating texts (fiction and non-fiction, for different purposes and in different registers).

## Pedagogical principles in the programme

PYP	MYP	DP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promotes inquiry based authentic language learning;</li> <li>- Integrates the teaching and learning of language into the programme of inquiry;</li> <li>- Develops the skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and media literacy;</li> <li>- Provides for the teaching of additional languages;</li> <li>- Provides appropriate feedback to support learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Includes Language and Literature (LL) courses next to Language Acquisition (LA) courses.</li> <li>- Considers prior knowledge</li> <li>- Develops language in context in each content area and in interdisciplinary units.</li> <li>- Promotes purposeful, disciplined and integrative understanding of the topics.</li> <li>- Promotes collaborative learning</li> <li>- Accommodates diverse learning styles</li> <li>- Values and respects students' ideas and mother tongues</li> <li>- Provides targeted assessment that integrates MYP objectives and criteria</li> <li>- Makes expectations explicit; provides appropriate feedback to support learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Considers prior knowledge</li> <li>- Develops language in context in each content area</li> <li>- Promotes collaborative learning</li> <li>- Accommodates diverse learning styles</li> <li>- Values and respects students' ideas and mother tongues</li> <li>- Embraces a multitude of perspectives</li> <li>- Makes expectations explicit; provides appropriate feedback to support learning</li> <li>- Enables students to understand how judgments about learning are made, and how to provide evidence of their learning</li> <li>- Develops meta-cognition, structured inquiry and critical thinking</li> <li>- Promotes engaging, challenging, and relevant learning</li> </ul>

# Appendix B - Mother tongue programme

## In school

- Use of mother tongue in the classroom is valued and encouraged at all grades.
- Both lesson tasks and homework tasks involving mother tongue are regularly integrated into unit work.
- There are buddy groups throughout the school, also between primary and secondary, secondary students provide mother tongue support to maintain reading and writing skills.
- In some cases buddies use their mother tongue to help peers in the English language development.
- The school supports parent volunteers in organising mother tongue classes after school, e.g. Dutch, Turkish, Hindi, Hebrew, German
- Focus of these classes is the maintenance and development of oral, aural and reading language skills.
- If mother tongue teachers are able to come to school, ISUtrecht provides classroom space and teaching facilities as necessary.
- Parents work in cooperation with the school to find a mother tongue teacher for the School Supported Self Taught (SSST) Language A class.
- Students have time during the school day to work on projects and/or receive instruction in their mother tongue.

## At home

- ISUtrecht recommends that parents support their children in maintaining their mother tongue to an age appropriate level. N.B. Parents should not privilege English over their mother tongue. This would impact negatively on the social and emotional balance of their child, as well as their academic development.
  - Parents must be patient and trust in their child, since children need the time to transition and adjust.
  - Parents should :
    - > Keep speaking in their mother tongue at home and dedicate as much time as possible to family, Mother Tongue moments: fun time, relaxing time, play time, exploring new environments together, reading for pleasure, etc.. (N.B. face to face interaction using mother tongue is more beneficial to early language development than video or audio contact)
    - > Have a supply of reading for pleasure resources to explore together.
    - > Speak in the mother tongue about the topics and concepts your children are studying at school.
    - > Collect unit related reading resources in the mother tongue that they can discuss together at home or to bring to school.
- If in doubt, parents should contact the class / subject teacher, the ELA specialist or the Language Coordinator.