

Language Policy



I. Craighouse Language Philosophy

When children learn language, they are not simply engaging in one kind of learning among many; rather, they are learning the foundations of learning itself... Language is not a domain of human knowledge; language is the essential condition of knowing, the process by which experience becomes knowledge. (Halliday, 1993)

Language stands at the centre of the many interdependent cognitive, affective, and social factors that shape learning. (Corson, 1999)

In Craighouse School, we believe that language is central to any process of learning; therefore, **“every teacher becomes a language teacher”** (IBO, 2014) since not only is learning a language important, but so is learning about a language and through a language.

We foster a multilingual environment that enhances our international perspective and enriches our students as they learn how to understand a culture through its language. Since we have pupils from different backgrounds, we promote **translanguaging** as *“the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximise communicative potential.”* Ofelia García (2009: 140).

As stated by the IBO:

Translanguaging is a process in which students draw on known languages, naturally and flexibly, combining their elements to meet communicative and social needs. It is what your students are doing when they make connections between their languages or use language skills from one language to support another. By supporting translanguaging, teachers can help students make meaning, access content, and promote cognitive growth. Translanguaging activates prior knowledge embedded in a different language, whilst affirming cultural identity (2018, 1).

We believe translanguaging amplifies our pupil's meaning-making process and helps them overcome language constraints. In this sense, “teachers aim to build on students’ diverse linguistic practices in order to support them in expanding their linguistic repertoires to include features needed to develop different kinds of literacies and subject-matter knowledge and to perform in academic environments” (García & Li Wei, 2014).

Although definitions of language often differ depending on the source, we agree that language is a system of conventional symbols that allows us to represent reality and communicate our thoughts and ideas. As Wittgenstein stated, “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world” (2001: 5.6); thus, **being bilingual or**

multilingual broadens horizons, enriches students' identities as “global citizens” and develops the skills, abilities and competencies that we strive for, especially those related to communication, international-mindedness and global perspective, as it appears in our pupil profile.

To this end, we believe that through language, our students get to know, comprehend and transform their world with words that become actions when they develop their communication skills. Through language, they get to know themselves, have the possibility to express their inner world and create in any field of knowledge, and ultimately contribute to a more peaceful world; therefore, language is a vital component of any learning process and, for this reason, **“all teachers become language teachers”**.

As the IBO states:

Educators need to understand the important potential role of language in cultivating intercultural awareness and international-mindedness. The pedagogical approach to language learning should:

- be open and inclusive
- affirm each learner's identity and autonomy
- promote critical thinking. (IBO, 2014)

This Language Policy seeks to establish the framework for language learning in Craighouse from Early Years to Year 12. It is important to recognise from the outset that this policy is by nature dynamic, designed to be revised, amended and changed in reaction to and in anticipation of changes both external and internal to our institution.

II. What are our goals for Language Teaching and Learning?

Our goal is to promote learning experiences that develop our pupils' voices as they learn how to think critically and express their ideas accurately and effectively in diverse contexts.

Language is an integral part of expressing complex and new ideas. As an IB school, we seek to create international-minded and bilingual students who can communicate fluently in English and Spanish to meet the needs of our ever-changing, globalised world and be able to participate in the construction of a more peaceful society.

It is our mission that all pupils develop into fluent English and Spanish communicators.

III. What are our teaching and learning beliefs regarding language?

In Craighouse School, the teaching and learning process is student-centred. Learning is maximised through a shared commitment to a constructivist, inquiry-based philosophy that aims to develop the learners' voice, choice, ownership and agency-driven learning.

All fundamentals of language (grammar, spelling, vocabulary) should be taught within context and in a concept-based learning environment. All students deserve to have access to explicitly modelled academic language within the context of the classroom in order to have the tools to express complex ideas.

Additionally, multi-language learning gives access to a more global education because language contains nuance and cultural context within it. Being fluent in two languages means our students will have access to more diverse texts and experiences from around the world.

Pedagogically, we believe in offering a curriculum that is accessible to all and we favour individualised education to allow all pupils to make the most progress possible.

IV. What practices would encourage our Language Teaching and Learning Goals?

In order to achieve meaningfully our Language Teaching and Learning Goals, it is imperative that all teachers employ a diverse range of methodologies and strategies that foster proficiency in all language areas. We firmly believe that by prioritizing the development of reading, writing, and oral communication skills, we not only enhance our students' language abilities but also bolster their overall skill set within the school environment.

Through the cultivation of strong communication skills, our pupils not only become more adept at expressing themselves effectively, but also enhance their social interactions, research and thinking skills. By emphasizing these fundamental language skills, we provide our students with a solid foundation that positively impacts their holistic development and prepares them for success in all areas of their academic journey.

- Reading

At our school, we firmly believe that we are all readers, and we are dedicated to fostering a culture of readers among every member of our school community. For us,

reading is not just a subject to be taught but a lifelong skill to be nurtured. From the Early Years, we have implemented the reader's workshop, within the balanced literacy framework of comprehensive literacy, which serves as the cornerstone of our approach. The focus of this workshop is not only to teach students how to read but to develop them into avid and critical readers. As our pupils' progress to the Middle and Senior sections, we continue to cultivate and reinforce this idea of being readers. We understand that the development of readers extends beyond the classroom, which is why we actively involve and collaborate with our teachers and parents to create a supportive reading environment. By working together as a community, we aim to instill a lifelong love for reading and empower our students to become confident and engaged readers.

- Writing

Aligned with our reading focus, we also place great importance on developing strong writing skills as an integral aspect. We believe that fostering effective writing abilities is crucial for personal expression and academic achievement. To achieve this, we offer a wide range of opportunities for our students to engage in both creative and formal writing experiences. Our Writers' Workshop, aligned with the balanced literacy framework, provides a platform for students to explore their creativity and refine their writing skills through various writing exercises and prompts. Additionally, we encourage individual and collaborative writing projects that promote critical thinking and effective communication. Our interactive and shared writing activities help students develop their ability to express ideas collectively. We also provide guidance and practice in academic essay production, equipping our students with the skills to excel in their academic pursuits, such as the PYP Exhibition, Personal Project and Extended Essay. Furthermore, we actively take part in writing competitions and support our school magazine, providing real-world contexts for our students to showcase their writing abilities. By nurturing a strong foundation in both reading and writing, we aim to empower our students to become confident and articulate communicators in all aspects of their lives.

- Oral communication

We have high expectations for our students to cultivate advanced oral skills in both creative and academic settings. To facilitate this, we strive to create a supportive environment where students feel comfortable speaking openly and confidently during class time and throughout the school day. We provide a variety of engaging activities that encourage and develop their oral communication abilities. These activities

encompass drama classes, poetry recitation contests, which promote artistic expression, debate experiences that foster critical thinking and persuasive speaking, collaborative conversations that enhance interpersonal skills, book clubs that encourage discussion and analysis, oral presentations that refine public speaking skills, and Socratic seminars that encourage thoughtful dialogue and active participation. Moreover, we understand the significance of preparing our pupils for IB Diploma oral evaluations and offer guidance and practice to excel in these assessments. Additionally, we provide opportunities for students to join the debate club, participate in Model United Nations (MUN) simulations, and engage in English competitions, all of which further develop their oral skills and enable them to find their unique voice and enhance self-discovery. By emphasising advanced oral communication skills, we empower our students to excel academically, express themselves confidently, and thrive in various real-world contexts.

V. How do we assess Language?

We embrace various principles to ensure effective language assessment. One of our fundamental principles is the implementation of diverse and challenging assessment strategies that are contextualised to the students' learning experiences. We believe that through these strategies, pupils can effectively show their knowledge, understanding, and skills across different areas and subjects. By integrating language assessment into various contexts, we provide students with opportunities to showcase their language proficiency in real-life situations, enhancing their overall language development.

Timely and constructive feedback is an integral part of our language assessment approach. We prioritise providing feedback to students as promptly as possible, enabling them to recognise their strengths and areas for improvement. This feedback not only highlights areas of growth, but also offers specific guidance on how students can enhance their language skills. We encourage self-assessment and co-assessment, empowering students to take an active role in evaluating their own progress and engaging in collaborative evaluations with their peers. By involving students in the assessment process, we foster a sense of ownership and responsibility for their language learning journey.

We recognise the educational value of information gathered through language assessment. To ensure continuous improvement, we maintain a systematic process of monitoring, systematisation, and analysis of assessment data. This allows us to

identify students' strengths and areas of improvement, leading to informed decision-making in adapting and refining learning experiences in the classroom. By regularly assessing student progress and analysing data, we can tailor instruction and interventions to address individual needs, promoting greater language proficiency and growth among our students.

We understand the importance of constant communication among all stakeholders involved in the learning process. This includes fostering regular communication between the home, teachers, and students. We actively encourage the exchange of information to inform and engage parents, share best practices, make collaborative decisions, and address any concerns or challenges. By establishing a strong communication network, we create a cohesive and supportive environment that aligns all participants' efforts toward facilitating optimal language learning outcomes.

VI. Craighouse as a Bilingual School

Language requirements for Admission

Prekinder and Kinder pupils are not expected to know any English. From Year 1 onwards, an English evaluation will be administered to all prospective applicants to ensure fairness. The family is responsible for supporting children to reach the minimum standard if accepted with a language level below the standard (English or Spanish). We also have a special Spanish acquisition programme for students whose first language is not Spanish.

English as the Language of Instruction

English is the language of instruction within the school from Playgroup until Year 6. This is what we understand as **full immersion**. During this period, all subjects are taught in English (with the exception of Spanish and Religion). Thus, a student's success in other subjects during this period of their education depends to a large degree upon their proficiency in English. Subject teachers must be proactive in developing students' general language skills as well as the language skills required by their particular subject (for example, specific Science terminology). Teachers must also differentiate their lessons in order to cater for students who are not native speakers of English. From Year 7 onwards, the teaching of English includes a complete and varied programme of studies reinforced by the school environment.

First language learning

In most cases at Craighouse, the pupils' first language is Spanish. Since the language of instruction is English, we are committed to promoting what is most often a child's first language, Spanish. Specialist Spanish language teachers have classes with pupils in Years 1 to 6 upwards. Some extracurricular activities are carried out in English for pupils at these levels.

Craighouse welcomes pupils whose first language is neither English nor Spanish and seeks to establish instances for these pupils to share something of their language and its surrounding culture with their classmates and teachers.

Other languages

Pupils who take Jewish religion classes from Years 1 to 9 learn to read and write basic Hebrew.

Pupils in Years 10-12 have the option to take the Ab Initio French course from the IB Diploma.

Exposure to Linguistic Diversity

Craighouse believes it is beneficial for pupils to be in contact with diverse and varied instances of spoken and written forms of English and Spanish. Students are exposed to the language and culture of different countries where Spanish and English are used. Students -particularly older ones- are taught to recognise, identify, and appreciate the myriad of different languages that exist. The international profile of Craighouse's teaching body actively reinforces the diversity of language.

References

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