

**Osaka YMCA International School (OYIS)**

**"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 Six, 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 language, as well as 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 vast 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. 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 Overseas 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.

Towards this end, most faculty and the Principal have successfully completed the "Teaching ESL students in mainstream classrooms" course or other second language teaching courses. The two English Support Services (ESS) 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 Support Services (ESS) department has the responsibility of testing new students. In Grades One to Six, native speakers are given an academic achievement test. EAL students are assessed using a standardised language assessment. They are tested on decoding, reading comprehension, writing, listening comprehension, and speaking. Students are then placed in Levels One to Five, based on their Cognitive Academic

Language Proficiency (CALP). In this system, Level One is the lowest and Level Five is the highest in terms of English language ability.

Students in Levels One to Three are assessed on a formal and informal basis by the ESS teachers throughout the year. In November, they are issued an ESS Progress Report followed by a parent-ESS teacher conference.

At the end of the year, all EAL students in Levels One to Five are given an age-appropriate standardised language assessment to determine their new ESS level for the following school year. In addition to the assessment, the ESS 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 ESS level. In short, there is a careful evaluation of the child's classroom performance and English development all year. Level One to Five students receive an ESS Language Report issued with the school report card. Students testing in at Levels One to Three will require support in the next school year.

In Early Childhood, students are admitted without any formal language assessment. Kindergarten B students receive a standardised language assessment at the end of the year to determine their Grade One entry level into the ESS programme.

### **English Language Support**

The English Support Services (ESS) department has the responsibility of supporting all students in Levels One through Three. 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 Six, students in Levels One to Three pay fees and receive direct additional language support from the ESS teachers. The ESS teachers help them using one of the following methods:

**Pull-out:** The ESS teacher works with a small group of students in the ESS classroom.

**Classroom-based:** The ESS teacher supports the EAL students in accessing a lesson taught by the classroom teacher.

**Collaborative Co-teaching:** The ESS teacher co-teaches a lesson or leads a smaller group of students alongside the classroom teacher.

### **The ESS After-School Club**

Participation is required for students in Levels One and Two for Grades Two through Six. Students receive instruction in two groups: Grades Two and Three and Grades Four through Six. They receive two one-hour lessons per week after school. There is no after-school English language support for students in ESL Levels Three to Five.

#### **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 in Japanese 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 the communication skills, both in oral and written language, to deal with familiar and practical needs, for future study, 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 two Japanese Units 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, a lower level for those L2 learners weak in Japanese, and a higher level for children with native or near-native Japanese ability. It is taught by qualified Japanese language teachers. Two Japanese classes are taught per week for all students from Grades One through Six.

New students entering the school are given a placement test based on decoding skills, reading comprehension, writing, listening and speaking. An observation of students 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 beginner or native speaker class at their grade level. The students receive ongoing formative

assessment and quizzes throughout each marking period. Parents are informed of their child's progress three times a year on the school report card.

### **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 begin 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.