



HIGH SCHOOL "CRNJANSKI"
INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE
DIPLOMA PROGRAMME

LANGUAGE POLICY

OBRAZOVNI SISTEM



EDUCATION SYSTEM



School language philosophy

Almost all education is language education.

Postman (1996)

We, at Gimnazija Crnjanski, strongly believe that "language is integral to exploring and sustaining personal development, cultural identity and intercultural understanding. It is the main tool for building our knowledge of the universe and our place in it. Language then, is central to learning, as well as to literacy, and is thus closely related to success in school." (*Learning in a language other than mother tongue*, published 2008).

We also strongly support the idea that "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 understanding and international mindedness." (*Learning in a language other than mother tongue*, published 2008).

Gimnazija Crnjanski and the IB Diploma Programme, are "committed to supporting multilingualism as fundamental to increasing intercultural understanding and international mindedness."

School language profile

Gimnazija Crnjanski, comprising the national and the international programmes of study, recognises that language acquisition and development plays a crucial role in each student's personal development. Therefore, we strive to provide the environment that will enable rich development of language and literacy for all learners, regardless of the student's programme of study. As a result, advancing mother tongue learning and learning foreign languages, in addition to English, are strongly supported and encouraged within the school and its programmes of study.

The IB Diploma programme of studies at Gimnazija Crnjanski recognises that "teaching languages in DP is crucial and should be open, inclusive, affirm each student's identity and promote critical thinking", as underscored in the *IB Language and Learning in the IB Programmes* document. According to the mentioned document, every student in the IBDP studies "in both their best language and in other languages taught as a requirement of the programme." With this in mind, DP students at Gimnazija Crnjanski study at least two languages throughout their time in the programme.



Language of Instruction

English is the language of instruction in the international programme of study at Gimnazija Crnjanski and the DP programme within it. Thus, it is the priority in the school's language programme to strengthen the English language skills and capabilities in all students throughout their time in the international programme. This becomes of greater importance with the students for whom English is not their mother tongue. The school, therefore, provides strong support for these students through English as an Additional Language (EAL) programme, that begins as early as in the primary years and continues up to the DP. All DP teachers, on their side, have a responsibility to address the language needs of their students while teaching their DP subject.

Moreover, the school encourages and strongly supports English to be adopted as a *lingua franca*, a common language of communication among DP students and teachers outside the classroom and in school hallways. It is also common, however, that DP students communicate with other, non-DP students in Serbian – the majority of students mother tongue outside classroom and during lesson breaks.

School Language Policy and IB Principles

The school language policy, being in strict correlation with the IB principles and practices (*Programme Standards and Practices, updated 2016*) and deriving from the school language philosophy, is intended to provide a framework that will ensure that the IB's values and aims are reflected in the school's organization activities.

Within our language policy we understand and recognise that:

- Language is central to learning and the school places importance on language learning including mother tongue, host country language and other languages (IB Standard A, Practice 7).
- Teaching and learning addresses the diversity of student language needs, including those for students learning a language(s) other than their mother tongue (IB Standard C3, Practice 7).



- Teaching and learning demonstrates that all teachers are responsible for language development of students (IB Standard C3, Practice 8).
- Collaborative planning and reflection recognizes that all teachers are responsible for language development of students (IB Standard C1, Practice 8).
- Administrators, teachers, librarians and other school staff will require professional development in the fields of language learning and teaching.
- Parents are to be involved in planning their children`s language profile and development.

Mother Tongue

“No matter what your first language, you should treasure it all life”

Kurt Vonnegut

Gimnazija Crnjanski, within all its programmes of study, the national and the international one, and across all year groups, from elementary to middle to IBDP, recognizes particular importance of mother tongues as languages that serve as the foundation for developing students’ sense of self-worth and cultural identity.

Serbian A mother tongue is the most usual choice of our students since majority of them are of local origin and come from the Serbian language background. Serbian mother tongue is mandatory for all Serbian mother tongue students, grades 1 to 10, and is also strongly recommended to the DP students as a group 1 course selection in grades 11 and 12 (DP Y1&2). Additionally, DP students studying in mother tongue other than English are allowed to study another mother tongue, English, if their English is proficient enough and if they express willingness to broaden their world views in that way.

Moreover, when it comes to Serbian being the most frequent mother tongue at Gimnazija Crnjanski, we also encourage and develop in our students a strong sense of regional awareness and open-mindedness for the languages/dialects in the Balkans that are linguistically very close to Serbian and easy to understand by our students (languages such as Bosnian, Croatian and Montenegrin). This is achieved through the use of various authors from the Balkans who have been writing in these languages/dialects, and whose works are usually used in different extracurricular activities.



Finally, In cases in which a student wishes to study a Language A which is not offered in the school, a School-Supported Self-Taught Language A: Literature course (SSST) is offered as a mother tongue option. The course is offered at a standard level only (SL).

School-Supported Self-Taught (SSST) Language A: Literature

As mentioned above, the school provides an SSST Language A Literature course for those students whose mother tongue is neither English nor Serbian and in case when there is less than five students interested in that particular language.

It is the school's responsibility to provide an SSST student with a best, well-qualified tutor for the required language and to appoint an SSST supervisor who is an experienced IB DP language A teacher.

The tutor, whether they work with the school in the community or remotely, is mainly responsible for providing the student with first and best language guidance (discussion of content, language, conventions, structure, and so on) for the various parts of the course of study and for setting mock or practice examinations, including oral assessments, and providing feedback on the student's performance.

The SSST supervisor, on their side however, is to accommodate in their schedule a regular, weekly, generic language A self-taught class in English, which is the school's language of instruction, in order to assist and clarify all aspects of the course and the assessment, and to supervise the student's progress in the work with the tutor in terms of literature analysis and language skills development.

The IBDP at Gimnazija Crnjanski has accommodated studies in several Self-Taught School-Supported languages so far: Russian, Dutch, Greek and Chinese.

Host Country Language / Serbian as a Second Language

Students at Gimnazija Crnjanski often come from various, mixed-family and other international backgrounds, speaking different languages, and knowing no or very little Serbian language. Therefore, the school offers an opportunity for them and their families to learn and discover the



cultural and linguistic values of the Serbian language, having in mind that they would spend at least two, usually more years in Serbia.

Serbian /Host country language classes are recommended and organised for all interested international students, and their parents, throughout their period of stay and from as early as primary years to middle and the Diploma Programme years.

We prefer to refer to these classes as the "second", and not the "foreign" language classes, because we strive to instil a sense of domestic atmosphere and hospitality in the educational surrounding. During these lessons, our Serbian language and literature teachers, in charge of delivering these classes, put every effort to encourage and include other students, native Serbian speakers, to help their fellow students in not just acquiring linguistic skills but also learning about multicultural profile of Serbia where many diverse ethnic communities live together (Hungarian, Romanian, Croatian, Albanian, Bosnian, etc.).

Other/Foreign Languages

"How many languages you know, that many times you are a man."

(Anton Chekhov)

The Chekov`s saying is the guiding principle in defining the language policy towards teaching and learning foreign languages in all study programmes taught at the school.

We strongly believe that learning different foreign languages leads to building cultural awareness, open-mindedness and readiness of our students to become the citizens of both the world and their local milieus.

Therefore, the school provides all the students with the opportunity to study as many foreign languages as possible throughout their education process

- English language is mandatory for all primary years students, while one more foreign language, among French, German, Russian or Spanish can be chosen in grades 1 to 4, as elective.

- French, German, Russian and Spanish are also offered in middle years national and international programmes, grades 5 to 9, as well as throughout the secondary grades 9 to 12, including the DP Years 1 & 2. It is mandatory for all students to study at least one, possible two foreign languages in their regular study programmes.



- In order to satisfy students` various foreign languages needs as well as to meet parents` requests for more language courses, the school has set up a *Center for Learning Foreign Languages "Crnjanski"* that offers additional courses in a desired language and level. After initial testing and in agreement with parents, highly qualified and experienced language teachers place all interested candidates in different groups according to their age and the level of knowledge. The courses vary from beginners to advanced and all leading to some internationally recognised language certificate (IELTS, FC, CAE,TOEFL, DELF, DELE, Goethe certificate). The lessons are scheduled after regular classes as an extracurricular activity, fully covered by parents.

Language courses in Diploma Programme

In line with the DP language requirements, acknowledging the complexity and range of language profiles that students bring to the DP and taking into consideration the diversity of student language needs, including those for students learning in a language other than their mother tongue, the school offers the following DP language courses:

Group 1 - Studies in Language A Literature or Language and Literature, HL and SL

a) Studies in Language A: Literature: Serbian, English

or any of the languages: Russian, Spanish, German upon student`s/parents request for individual tuition or if there is a group of five students or as a SSST course. The course focuses on the close study of literary texts and their varying contexts.

b) Studies in Language and Literature: English, focuses on critical literacy and the way meaning in texts is constructed by, among other things, the contexts of production and reception.

Each DP student must choose at least one Group 1 course, either on a higher (HL) or a standard level (SL).

Group 2 - Language Acquisition courses

Every DP student is required to learn at least one additional language during the two-year programme. Group 2 offers two modern language courses:

a) Language B courses in: English, French, German or Spanish, for students with some previous knowledge of the language, either at HL or SL.



b) Language Ab initio courses in: French, German or Spanish, only SL, for students with little or no experience of the target language.

Besides acquiring the knowledge of another language, these courses offer an insight into another culture and tradition that brings to further development of an IB Learner Profile characteristic of intercultural awareness and international-mindedness.

Teaching and learning in a Language other than Mother tongue

Many learners in the international programmes at Gimnazija Crnjanski, from primary to middle years and up to DP, have varied and complex multilingual backgrounds that define their different language profiles. This means a large number of learners must access the majority of an international programme curriculum in a language other than their mother tongue.

The school, therefore, has to demonstrate "a thorough understanding of how this situation impacts on learning, to ensure that the value of the learner diversity is not lost, that there is equal access to the curriculum for all learners and that the standards of conditions and practices in place foster a successful teaching and learning environment for everyone." (*Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes, published 2008*).

The school also acknowledges the fact that learners learning in a language that is not their mother tongue may take up to seven years or longer to reach the same proficiency level in academic language as a person learning in a mother tongue.

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Taking everything into consideration, the school organises English language support classes (EAL) for a range of learners from non-English speaking backgrounds, from beginners to high intermediate and from primary to middle years and up to DP. Learners then receive specialised English language instruction either in small groups or individually, during or after regular class hours.

EAL in Diploma Programme

Students entering the DP programme at Gimnazija Crnjanski vary in their English language competence. Some are true native speakers of English, others are bilingual students who were either born or previously educated in an English speaking country. However, the majority of our DP students are of local origin who have learnt English, the DP language of instruction, as a second language. They usually possess a considerable command of English when entering the



DP, but they still need the English language additional support (EAL) to further develop the language and achieve better final results.

Assessment

For this reason, before entering the IB DP, and as part of the school's admission policy, all prospective DP students are assessed for their current language competence. The English admission test, designed by the English language teacher(s), is either based on a written response to literature and assessed by the English A rubric, or is the assessment of the four language skills similar to the international English language exams (TOEFL, FC, IELTS) The language requirement is a B2 +/C1 level, the upper-intermediate to advanced, for a student to be able to join and follow the diploma programme.

Language Support

If the assessment shows that a student lags behind, the school, upon request, and in agreement with EAL teacher(s), the student and the parents, provides the additional EAL lessons. They are based on individual student`s needs and accommodated in student`s timetables, during the initial or the whole study period. The regular DP language teacher(s), supported by the school and the DP Coordinator, are provided with all teaching materials, the time and space necessary for teaching these lessons.

Academic Writing

Teaching experience has shown that the DP students` biggest challenge in the programme is academic writing, i.e. appropriate formal writing for the DP exam purposes and all the written assignments in different DP subjects, as well as the core Extended and the TOK essays. Even the students with the full command of English need to be taught how to define a thesis, how to structure a paragraph, organise the paper or reference and list bibliography. Students are introduced with the MLA and Harvard systems of referencing, commonly used in listing the resources. In addition, great emphasis is given to the occurrence of plagiarism in written works and how to avoid it. For this reason, and in order to cover this specific need, an additional lesson of academic writing per week is organized and taught by the English language teacher(s) for all students in year 1 of the DP. Moreover, all DP teachers are responsible to, throughout the course, assist and support their students in proper assignment writings related to the subject.

Teachers` role and Responsibilities

In line with the *Programme Standards and Practices*, all DP teachers recognise and actively support that "all teachers are responsible for language development of students" (IB Standard



C3, Practice 8), and that "teachers plan and reflect collaboratively in order to assist their students` language development" (IB Standard C1, Practice 8).

All DP teachers, following the IB instructions and their own good practices, when planning the range of new learning always try to "take into consideration student`s prior knowledge, explicitly activate learners` prior understanding using the mother tongue if appropriate and use their knowledge of learners` prior understanding to differentiate tasks and activities that will build up the further background knowledge necessary for new learning to occur." (*Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes*).

In DP Y1, teachers assist students in acquiring terminology in each DP subject of study, make up their own glossary of subject terms and notions, help students understand the subject requirements in terms of writing, essay writing, referencing, citing and the principles of academic honesty.

Teachers also take every opportunity to encourage and stimulate all students to read as extensively as possible because learners who read extensively both inside and outside an IB programme have far greater opportunities to extend their academic language and concepts than those whose reading is limited. Opportunities for enjoying reading are important. Equally important are opportunities for practising writing in a wide range of genres.

Lastly, the collaboration and sharing good practices among DP language teacher(s) and all other DP teachers is invaluable for further strengthening teachers` expertise and confidence.

Conclusion

We understand that the language policy defined by the school is a working document subject to revision and changes. We are open to the DP teachers` recommendations and asses carefully the students` and parents` suggestions. We put every effort to collect the information on students` language needs through regular assessment, interviews with students and teachers, informal discussions and observations. The information gathered is invaluable in later readjusting and improving the school language policy.

Last updated and revised in spring 2021.



References:

- 1) *Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes*, published April 2008
- 2) *Language and Learning in the IB Programmes*, published in 2005.
- 3) *Guidelines for developing a school language policy*, (April 2008)
- 4) *The Language A: literature (school-supported self-taught, first assessment 2021) guide*
- 5) *Language A: literature school-supported self-taught guidance for schools*, published in 2019
- 6) *Programme Standards and Practices*, updated March 2016