Tara Junior School Language Policy

Tara Junior School Language Policy

This document outlines the philosophy of language teaching and learning at Tara, along with our aims and objectives. The formulation of this policy was a joint collaboration between staff, parents and students. This policy reflects the valued input of these stakeholders and the principles of the Primary Years Programme of the International Baccalaureate Organisation.

"A language policy is an action statement… It is concerned less with where the students in a school are going, and more with how they are going to get there. (*Language Policy in Schools, David Corson (1999) in Primary Years Programme Guidelines for developing a language policy. 2006, 2008.*)

Philosophy

At Tara we believe that language is how a person expresses themselves, their culture and their faith. It enables them to communicate and make sense of the world. Language may be in the form of observing, speaking and listening, reading and viewing, and recording and writing. All students are language learners regardless of their language background or ability. Our philosophy of language seeks to support language development, additional language learning and the mother tongue.

A significant driver of Tara's approach to language learning and teaching is the development of a culture of agency. Effective and confident use of language is essential for a student to be an agent for their own learning and happiness.

'Agency is fundamental to learning. Agency is present when students partner with teachers and members of the learning community to take charge of what, where, why, with whom and when they learn. Agency acknowledges the rights and responsibilities of the individual, supporting voice, choice and ownership for everyone in the learning community. A commitment to agency…will create a culture within the learning community where students co-construct and self-adjust their learning experiences, building self-efficacy, a greater sense of learner ownership and contributing to their social, emotional and cognitive growth.'
The Learner in the Enhanced PYP 2017 p1-2

Language is transdisciplinary – it is integral to and transcends all disciplines. Students learn language, learn about language and learn through language. At Tara all staff are responsible for the teaching of language and therefore all spaces are language learning centres. We embed language skills and knowledge in all curriculum areas. We aim to inspire students to develop their language skills and transfer these skills across all areas of life so they can actively participate in their education, relationships, culture and the world.

Language is an essential tool for living. As we use language in purposeful ways, we aim to provide learning experiences where students can see the relevance of what they are learning. All users need to be able to express themselves or communicate in ways that are contextually relevant and therefore learning needs to be contextually relevant. Language learning breaks down barriers, grows brains and grows friendships. The scope is endless in terms of intercultural respect and understanding within Tara and beyond

Policy – Language 2

Multilingualism

At Tara we value and respect the cultural backgrounds of all students. Therefore, we aim to encourage and celebrate multilingualism. At Tara, the vast majority of students communicate in English. Those who have a language other than English are enrolled here with learning English as a priority. As the language of instruction is English, it allows these students to become balanced multilinguals who are proficient, literate and knowledgeable in two or more languages.

Students who maintain their first language tend to:

- Draw on their total language experience and so continue their conceptual development
- Build on their competencies and abilities
- Feel that the greatest resource they bring to school is valued

(*Gibbons, 1991*)

> Students who learn in their mother tongue may have an intuitive sense how language works and unconsciously use this to assist them in language learning.
> *Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes p.5*

This boosts students' general confidence with language so they are more likely to:

- Have a better idea of how language works and a greater understanding of language in the classroom
- Make connections between similarities in words, pronunciations, spelling and grammar
- Benefit from similarities in sentence structure and sounds
- Join in actively in the classroom
- Make a more systematic use of language resources such as dictionaries and environmental print
- Seek out new information
- Maintain a connection, and be enabled to speak and have a meaningful relationship, with parents, grandparents and wider family

Maintaining our first language can result in the development of positive values and attitudes.
Students are more likely to:

- Become proud of, and interested in maintaining, their cultural heritage
- Gain a broader interest in languages generally and in learning about different cultures
- Be keen to try out a third language- the skills and attitudes they have gained in maintaining their home language while learning the language of instruction, assist them in taking on a third
- Build understanding of people from other countries and cultures which contributes to a better society and more peaceful world

During the enrolment process at Tara we gather information about the multilingualism of our students. This information is also brought to light as the students share about themselves with their class and peers. This information forms part of a student's profile in our tracking system. A multilingual collection in our library is maintained and widely used across the school, and represents the first language of every student in the school.

Within our classes and as a school, we provide opportunities for students to share multilingualism during lessons, for them to act as primary sources about their heritage and culture and for their family/community to act as primary sources. We aim for all teaching and learning experiences to be accessible and where possible offer access to peer support to facilitate learning through their first language. Language is integral to our

Policy – Language 3

Language is central to all learning and at the forefront of everything we do. Most students at Tara are proficient in written and spoken English. We have a range of students who come from non-English speaking backgrounds, but communicate proficiently in English. A small number of parents do not speak English at all and a small number of parents have a limited grasp of English.

> Students need many opportunities to listen and speak in order to communicate effectively, and to establish and maintain relationships. Talk in the classroom is fundamental to promoting language learning."
> *Making the PYP Happen* p.69

English is the primary vehicle for inquiry at Tara. It is through speaking and listening, reading and viewing, writing and responding, that students' knowledge and understanding of language will be developed. We aim to do this by providing rich, relevant and purposeful learning experiences that address the diversity of learners. The responsibility for the development of English as our language of instruction, falls upon all staff members. Transdisciplinary units of inquiry mean that the majority of English learning occurs within the Programme of Inquiry, or where more meaningful, in stand-alone units which utilise explicit strategies as their methodology. (This includes phonics, spelling and grammar within the classroom.)

At Tara we identify students who arrive at the school with little or no English. Currently this number is very low. The aim for EAL/D students is to equip them with a sufficient understanding of language to enable them to contribute to and access the classroom and playground interactions. In most cases the provision of EAL teaching happens within the context of the regular classroom, where a specialist teacher or teacher's aide supports the learning.

> Cooperative, individual, whole class and paired talking and listening opportunities exist across the curriculum. Talking and listening skills are explicitly taught, assessed and reported on.
> *"Reading and writing float on a sea of talk"* James Britton

Please see Appendix B: *Targeted intervention strategies for English language learning across the 4 stages of primary education*

EAL/D – English as an additional language/dialect

EAL/D students are those whose first language is a language or dialect other than English and who require additional support to assist them to develop proficiency in English. At Tara we acknowledge that EAL/D students come from diverse backgrounds and include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students whose first language is a creole or a variety of Standard Australian English such as Aboriginal English.

Specific Support for EAL/D students

The provision of this support varies from year to year according to need, budget and resources. At Tara EAL/D students are supported through three key approaches:

EAL/D students enter Australian schools at different ages and stages of schooling and at different stages of English language learning. They have diverse talents and capabilities and a range of prior learning experiences and levels of literacy in their first language and in English. EAL/D students represent a significant and growing percentage of learners in NSW schools. For some, school is the only place they use Standard Australian English.

National Literacy Learning Progression, NESA. p7

1. Withdrawal for small groups or individual students intensive EAL/D tuition.
2. Inclusion in small group, intensive phonics-based English Language programs.
3. Targeted in class support from teacher's aides and classroom teachers.

Tara's approach is informed by the understanding there are 4 phases of language development for EAL/D learners, as well as individual differences within these phases.

The 4 phases of language development:	
Learning Progression Phase	**Average time to progress through the phase**
Beginning English	6-9 months (less than a year)
Emerging English	1-2 years
Developing English	2-5 years
Consolidating English	5-7+ years

Please see Appendix D: *An explanation of the 4 phases of language development and support strategies for EAL/D students*

Additional Language Learning

The teaching and learning of an additional language is a highly valued experience by students, parents and staff. At Tara the additional language is Spanish. For most Tara students, this will be their second language. However, for a large number, this will be their third or fourth.

Through learning Spanish, students develop communicative skills in the language, and understanding of how languages work as a system and intercultural understanding capability.

> Research shows that learning language in early childhood helps children in their other school work and in their personal development.
>
> *ACSSO- Australian Council of*

Spanish was chosen as the additional language as it is considered one of the easiest languages to learn. This increases motivation as students more readily experience success and competence. It is estimated it takes 22-24 weeks (575-600 hours) to become proficient in Spanish compared to 88 weeks (2200+ hours) to become proficient in a language that is considered hard to learn, such as Chinese or Arabic. There are 470 million native Spanish speakers and 89 million with Spanish as their second language, making Spanish one of the most widely spoken languages.
(http://www.effectivelanguagelearning.com/language-guide/language-difficulty)

The teaching and learning of Spanish is the responsibility of both the language specialist and the class teacher for 120 minutes per week. This ensures the learning of Spanish does not end when the specialist teacher leaves the room. The class teachers participate in the lessons either in a team-teaching capacity or alongside students as fellow-learners. Explicit and experiential language teaching is an appropriate way for Spanish skills to be developed, practiced and consolidated, with 'play' employed as an engaging learning and teaching vehicle.

> There is no faster and more inclusive way to prove to a foreigner that you are dedicated and truly interested in them than speaking their language.
>
> *Major Michael Stone, East Timor Peace Negotiator, Australian Defence Force*

> Genuine multilingualism promotes unity in diversity and international understanding.
>
> *UN Resolution GA/10592*

The Spanish program is developed in close consultation with the Spanish teacher, classroom teachers and the Dean of Learning (PYP E-6) to ensure integrated units support the learning within the class programme. Where relevant the Spanish Teacher supports the Programme of Inquiry. Considerable thought continues to be devoted to exploring the best way to contribute to the central idea of units of inquiry through Spanish. Innovative language learning practices are growing strongly at Tara, with a focus on inquiry, depth of language and cultural understanding.

Review of Policy: This policy is set for review by all stakeholders every two years.

Reviewed December 2018

References

http://www.effectivelanguagelearning.com/language-guide/language-difficulty

EAL/D Advice for Schools, Department of Education Communities (2014)

The Learner in the Enhanced PYP (2017) IBO

Major Michael Stone, East Timor Peace Negotiator, Australian Defence Force

UN Resolution GA/10592

ACSSO- Australian Council of State School Organisations

Making the PYP Happen: A curriculum framework for international primary education 2009

"Reading and writing float on a sea of talk" James Britton

Language Policy in Schools, David Corson (1999) in Primary Years Programme Guidelines for developing a language policy. 2006, 2008.

National Literacy Learning Progression, NSW Education Standards Authority (2018)

Gibbons, P. (1991) Learning to Learn in a Second Language

International Baccalaureate (2008). Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes

Appendix A: A summary of the consultation process – 2015

Staff	Parents	Students
How do we use language?		
• to communicate: talking, reading, writing, speaking, observing, listening, creating, telling stories, explaining, describing • to further our understanding • to entertain, to provide pleasure • to record memories • to inform • to cause pain • to interpret things, including on line • to exchange ideas • to make sense of the world and appreciate it • express thoughts and feelings • reading and sharing with others • use: only stuff that's useful and gets me what I need • connecting old knowledge to new knowledge • it's messy and in draft form at times	• through listening • to communicate • conversations • verbally, writing, reading • audio	• to communicate • to speak with blind people • everyday to communicate with others about feelings, information, emotions, feelings • language is a learning tool • to read and write • learn different languages
What is language?		
• communication- written, verbal, digital for a variety of purposes • helps us make meanings/sense of and relationships within a global context • a tool to help express ideas	• the ideas of one human conveyed to another • a communication tool • verbal conversation • instructions, communication, life • the expression of your thoughts	• how people interact with each other • speaking, talking, reading and writing • language expands our vocabulary • based on the alphabet and comes in many different languages • languages are unique • lots of words
What is language used for?		
• to communicate verbal, written, pictorial, multi-modal • to get what we want • to make sense of the world • ordering our thoughts • to record ideas and information • sustain culture • to progress society • everything • express emotions • to inform • to create • to reflect • to function • to unite and separate • to define who you are, a sense of identity • for ourselves and others	• communication • learning everyday skills • instructions • learning • all communication- written, verbal, non-verbal • creation • to entertain, persuade, inform, inspire, encourage	• talk to people in other countries in a different language • to make up our own language • for learning, commercialism and reading • build vocabulary • its English, German, African, Portugese

What are the components of a successful reading program?		
Staff	**Parents**	**Students**
• explicit phonics • convey meaning- allow students real use • enjoyment- students are not bored by it • authentic integration • skills and strategies that can be transferred • purposeful • taught across all KLAs, everyone's responsibility • when students can use what they have learnt to help them make meaning of language that they are unsure of • reading and loving it • teaching skills in a meaningful way • sequential • moderately challenging • enjoyable, interesting, relevant, varied • have a real audience- a purpose • formal and informal • skills should be in a real context • 21stC – replicate what language looks like now and what it might look lie in the future • inferential • strategies • not being boxed in by deficits	• let the kids decide- ownership, accountability, creativity, enjoyment • reading followed by more reading • student relevance • student input • student choice • having children involved in developing the program • balance • balance of choice for child and teachers • relevant and engaging literature • purposeful writing • strategic thinking • imagery/iconography • ways of communicating through a child's mind • ownership • contemporary	• books about lots of different things • movies from other countries • lots of reading • videos (documentaries) with information • listening to others and learning from them • working in small groups • teachers teaching us • being creative and making up things • learning at home as well as school • explaining language visually, with words or mentally • having things like Talkfest and Debating • spelling • reading • music • UOI • writing • English

Appendix B: A summary of the consultation process – 2018 and 2019

September 2018 – Parul Roy, Ruth Adams and Wendy Abernethy completed an initial update of the Language Policy. This was refined in December by Wendy Abernethy, Denise Hayward and Ruth Adams

January 2019 – Policy presented to other staff for comment

February 2019 – Parent Focus Group asked to comment on the policy and provide feedback

Policy – Language 9

Appendix C: Targeted intervention strategies for English Language learning across the 4 stages of primary education

For general strategies for learning and teaching in the language of instruction (English), see Tara's Language (English Scope and Sequence and Tara Context)

Early Stage 1 – girls aged 4-6 years

The primary avenue for promoting English language learning in Early Stage One is through structured play skills development programs, the Programme of Inquiry and the English language program. This program addresses the NESA outcomes and utilises a synthetic phonics approach and direct, explicit literacy instruction. Students benefit from differentiated learning experiences throughout the day and implemented by the classroom teacher and members of the LEAP team.

Stages 1, 2 and 3 – girls aged 6-12 years

The primary avenue for promoting English language learning in Stages 1-3 is through the Programme of Inquiry and the English language program. The English program addresses the NESA outcomes and utilises a synthetic reading approach and direct, explicit literacy instruction. Students benefit from personalised differentiated learning experiences throughout the day implemented by the classroom teacher and members of the LEAP team.

Occasionally students in Stages 1-3 will require additional or specialised language support. Intervention is for a finite period and addresses specific goals, unique to each student. As much as possible, all interventions are either in-class or before school. Language withdrawal lessons can be either in small groups or one-on-one. These lessons use a synthetic reading approach and direct, explicit literacy instruction. Lessons are designed to assist the development of skills in reading, spelling, writing and comprehending spoken and written English language, for study and everyday life. Student progress is monitored, communicated to parents and recorded on the Tara student tracking document. Students can also access EAL/D trained tutors at their own cost.

English Language learning is further promoted during designated play skills lessons and through immersion in well-resourced natural play scenarios during morning tea and lunch.

Appendix D: An explanation of the 4 phases of language development and support strategies for EAL/D students

Beginning English Phase

These learners come to Tara with some print literacy in their first language. This may include ELC and Kindergarten students who are born in Australia. During this phase, learners are supported with their orientation to school and with developing new friendships and relationships with staff. Students are assessed for their English language proficiency to determine the needs and level of EAL/D support required.

Where appropriate, students participate specifically designed learning experiences. These lessons are designed to develop oral fluency skills. This fluency begins with preproduction, where learners have a receptive vocabulary but are not yet ready to speak in the second language.

Emerging English Phase

These students understand and participate in classroom behaviours and school routines. They engage with curriculum demands with some success, but often require assistance to clarify and consolidate understanding. Explicit and focused language teaching will enable them to produce simple written and spoken English, using predictable and learned formulas. These learners still require extensive EAL/D explicit teaching throughout the school day.

Where appropriate, students access specifically designed learning experiences including synthetic phonics programs.

Developing English Phase

These students can speak functional English, and have a developing knowledge of print literacy in English. They are active participants in classroom and school routines, and are able to concentrate for longer periods. They purposefully engage with curriculum demands with increasing success. Their first language continues to be a valuable support, and these learners understand the value of code-switching – that is, the ability to change from one language/dialect to suit the context. They produce increasingly extended pieces of spoken and written English (although they may be more proficient in one mode than the other), which include their own innovations with the language. However, they are still developing control over English grammar and building their vocabulary; hence, they continue to need explicit language to be taught, and teaching strategies supportive of EAL/D learners, particularly with academic language of subject disciplines. They are increasingly able to use English sufficiently to demonstrate their understanding of content.

Consolidating English Phase

These students have a sound knowledge of English. They are active and increasingly independent participants in classroom and school routines, and are mostly able to concentrate on classroom tasks, including extended teacher talk. An increased ability to use English means that they purposefully engage with curriculum demands with general success. They understand and produce spoken and written texts

for a range of specific purposes, with effective control of appropriate text structures features. However, they still require focused language teaching and strategies supportive of EAL/D learners, as the academic language of subject disciplines increases, becoming grammatically dense and with increasingly abstract and technical vocabulary. They will still require explicit teaching to develop their understanding of culturally laden topics of study (eg novels or historical inquiries).

More information can be found at:
http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/EAL_D_Learning_Progression_Foundation_to_Year_10_09052014_file_2.pdf