



مدرسة غرس العالمية
Ghars International School

LANGUAGE Policy

Ghars International School

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Our vision: why is GIS different to other international schools in Oman?

We, the staff at GIS, have a sincere and genuine enjoyment of teaching and learning in different languages, primarily in English and Arabic. We recognise the importance of learning English for future success but for us, our promotion of the English language goes beyond this. We want to instil in our students the same enthusiasm we hold in speaking both English and Arabic. We encourage them not only to see the great diversities of global languages, but to celebrate the similarities and differences in both language and culture within the Omani culture and curriculum.

At GIS, we recognise that our children come from different language backgrounds. Our students are unique individuals and we aim to teach them in a unique way. Whilst offering the same international programme to all, we personalise and differentiate the learning experience to allow our students to access, grow and succeed in their studies.

What we do

At Ghars, English is the primary language of instruction whilst Arabic is maintained at grade level proficiency for native speakers and taught as an additional language for non-native speakers. The two languages are taught either as subjects or through subject matter content. This develops both basic inter-personal communication skills¹ and cognitive academic language proficiency² in both English and Arabic. The ultimate instructional goal is the attainment of appropriate levels of proficiency in the two languages, taking into account those variables, as stated above, which affect language acquisition and development.

¹ (BICS-the ability to communicate in an additional language)

² CALP-the ability to think and to solve problems in the additional language

One advantage of this approach is that it promotes an appreciation of cultural and linguistic diversity. Ghars students transcend their own cultural boundaries to become international and independent thinkers and communicators. Ghars International School also values bi/multilingualism among its students for the educational and professional opportunities and recognises these skills may ensure further success in a global community.

How we do it
Ghars's language programme is implemented in the following ways:

1. In the classroom:

- Relating new material to students' life experiences;
- Drawing attention to key specialist vocabulary;
- Using a variety of assessment tools and implementing interactive group activities in an integrated curriculum;
- Making high-level academic content instructionally comprehensible (through the use of contextualisation strategies such as gestures, visual aids, maps, graphs, manipulatives, drama, and songs);
- Creating classroom environments that are discourse-rich and process-oriented (plentiful opportunities for students to listen, read, speak, and write through interactive strategies)
- Using instructional strategies which specifically support content-based language learning.

2. In the curriculum:

- We teach students to use active and experiential learning strategies appropriate for linguistically and cognitively diverse students.
- We use specific instructional strategies for different kinds of learners and take into account their different backgrounds.

- We teach and model language-learning strategies (metacognitive, cognitive, and affective) to enable students to become self-directed and self-regulated learners.
- We integrate language instruction with content instruction. Explicit attention is given to the syntactic and semantic features of language in the design of lessons.
- We teach aspects of speech, word forms, language structures, discourse and writing conventions explicitly or in the form of pop up grammar as outlined in the language scope and sequence.
- We consider holistic performance more significant than knowledge of discrete linguistic items (i.e. what students can do over what they have memorised).
- We systematically keep track of the language acquisition of all students and use this knowledge to help students overcome difficulties and facilitate progress.

3. In the school-wide ethos:

- We model metalinguistic learning strategies.
- We encourage methods of teaching and assessment that enable students from diverse backgrounds to develop and demonstrate fully their language proficiency.
- We give ongoing feedback to students on their linguistic and cognitive development through observation and measurement strategies.
- We hold high linguistic and academic expectations for all students.
- We involve parents in the linguistic and academic development of their children.
- We recognise and support students' linguistic and academic needs and strengths.
- We create heterogeneous class groupings to ensure a broad language and cultural mix and to facilitate language learning.

- We provide additional support to students who face difficulties.
- We nurture a global perspective of cultural events not only in our language classes, but also throughout our academic programmes.
- We appoint staff from various cultures.
- We address multi-cultural themes.
- We encourage the participation of diverse-culture representatives in a decision-making capacity regarding social and cultural activities through involvement with our parent association.

Language acquisition beyond the classroom

We recognise that language acquisition should not be limited to the classroom but instead can be explored by immersing students coming from non-English or non-Arabic backgrounds in the school and community. To that end, we strive to create and take advantage of opportunities where children can make progress in their first language and attain proficiency in their second language. We actively encourage social integration into the school and community, building a positive self-image for each child. As the host country language, we want children to learn and enjoy Arabic through field trips, by interacting with guest speakers, and in community service. We sincerely appreciate the diversity of the mother tongue and the perceived similarities and differences. Furthermore, we appreciate the need to highlight an awareness and respect for the diverse types of discourse and language varieties found within the community.

Language acquisition in the home

The home environment is a key factor in facilitating linguistic and academic success, irrespective of whether or not they come from a bilingual/multilingual background. We expect that parents show a positive attitude towards learning additional languages.

At least one person inside the home should be able to help the child in developing and maintaining mother tongue literacy skills in the home, encouraging and supporting the child's additional language acquisition. Parents will help their child in their learning journey by supplying multilingual materials in the home e.g., bilingual dictionaries and taking advantage of language learning experiences in the community. We actively encourage parents to make use of library and online resources in English and Arabic to support nits of Inquiry/learning as well as multilingual and bilingual books for independent reading. Most importantly, we look to parents to share their own language learning experiences and demonstrate that they value other cultures and languages.

GIS Language Programmes

Ghars welcomes children from all nationalities. The School Principle, through the admissions process, aims to create heterogeneous groups for each grade level.

English: All students follow the Cambridge Primary Curriculum.

Arabic: Students maintain grade-level academic skills and literacy in alignment with the curriculum of the Omani Ministry of Education, irrespective of whether Arabic is the native tongue.

English as an Additional Language: EAL support is provided in the classroom

Foreign Languages³ - We provide opportunities for the study and acquisition of languages in addition to English and Arabic (French or Spanish) from 3rd grade.

³ Outside of Arabic or English

Glossary

Bilingualism: ranges from perfect command of two languages to the ability to use another language for practical purposes, however trivial the use.

Discrete linguistic item: A discrete linguistic item is an item of language isolated from context.

Examples of discrete items could be the past form '-ed', a phrasal verb such as 'get up', or a conjunction such as 'in addition'.

EAL: English as an Additional Language: When English is taught within school, but is not spoken in the home. This could refer to the EAL programme in school or recommended instructional strategies. (Not to be confused with ESL see below)

ESL: English as a Second Language: When a child's parent(s) speaks English as their mother tongue, therefore the child is already constantly immersed in the language outside of the classroom.

Experiential learning strategies: Experiential learning is inductive, learner-centred, and activity-oriented. The emphasis in experiential learning is on the process of learning and not on the product.

Facilitator: member of a classroom team who facilitates access of second language learners to the mainstream curriculum.

First language: The first language to which the learner is exposed.

Heterogeneous Groups: groups in the classroom which are made up of a mix of language and cultural background, gender, varying abilities as well as different educational and emotional needs.

Holistic performance: taking into account all aspects of language use including, not just accuracy, but also fluency, register, ability to communicate, risk-taking, voice, etc.

Home language: The language used most frequently in the home. On some occasions, this may be a different language to their first language (see above) if their personal circumstances change.

Integrated Curriculum: the choice of topics or themes taught are interdisciplinary, (i.e. the activities used in teaching incorporate the various subject areas).

Inter-language: an intermediate form of language used by second language learners in the process of learning a language. Interlanguage contains some transfers or borrowing from the first language, and is an approximate system with regard to grammar and communicating meaning.

Key specialist vocabulary: refers to academic vocabulary, some of which is useful across the academic subjects, e.g., observe, compare, whilst some is subject specific, e.g., igneous, coefficient.

Language acquisition: Language acquisition is defined as a natural progression or development in the use of language. It is typified by infants and young children learning to use their mother tongue but also refers to second language learners. Language acquisition is distinguished from language learning. Language learning is associated with rote memorization of language items, e.g., vocabulary lists and grammar rules.

Language-learning Strategies: procedures or techniques that learners can use to facilitate a learning task.

Social/affective: interacting with others for learning or using affective control for learning, (co-operative learning strategies, interviews, making choices about learning)

Cognitive: manipulating the material to be learned through rehearsal, organisation or elaboration. It involves internal mental procedures that support language learning including repetition, note-taking, imagery, grouping, metacognitive: strategies that involve the processes of planning, self-monitoring, problem solving, and evaluating learning.

Language proficiency: Language proficiency or linguistic proficiency is the ability of an individual to speak or perform in an acquired language.

Language profile: contains information about the languages spoken by a child to different members of the family and their self-assessed level of proficiency in the four language domains (speaking, listening, reading and writing), as well as the languages spoken to the child by different family members.

Meaningful language event: an episode of social interaction, facilitated by adults, through the medium of language, where the child is learning to mean, to communicate, to regulate their lives and acquire knowledge. For example, when a child conferences with a teacher during target setting or sharing responses to a story, poem or personal experience. The adult may scaffold the child's response by modelling the language required, giving alternatives and asking the child to choose or by simply encouraging and giving wait time.

Metalinguistic: using language to describe language. For example, being able to name and identify parts of speech or explain why we would say "he went"

rather than "he good" or being able to look for and alternative adjectives in a piece of descriptive writing.

Miscue analysis: a type of reading assessment that provides information on decoding skills, reading strategies, and comprehension while students read aloud.

Multilingual: This term is used to describe social contexts, such as schools, where there are speakers of many different languages.

Native speakers: those whose first language is the one in question.

Pop-up Grammar: This refers to giving very short grammar explanations, usually five seconds or less.

Syntactic: relating to the way in which linguistic elements (such as words) are put together to form constituents (such as phrases or clauses).

Semantic: relating to meaning.