



Language Philosophy

Anyone who is in labor or who breaks a leg in a downhill skiing accident would hardly, in either case, make conscious language choices in expressing their pain, but rather regress into using the language closest at heart. That is how people in general work; it's only natural. One could perhaps say that mother tongue languages¹ serve as comfort zones in that they constitute an integral part in the formation of our identities and our growth as humans and psychological beings. However, as language is a social construction as a result of interpersonal interaction, it is also “a strong enculturating force”², shaping the way we relate to and conceptualize the world around us. Hence, while mother tongue maintenance and development is crucial in an educational context, enabling positive, cognitive development, it is through learning and communicating in languages other than our own that we can cultivate to the fullest an intercultural understanding beyond our ingrained horizons.

Sweden has a long tradition of promoting what is generally referred to as “good bilingualism”³, which encourages the acquisition of at least one second language in addition to the mother tongue of the majority, in our case Swedish. In recent years, along with the influx of immigrants from all over the world, Swedish schools have been forced to find forms to adapt to a radically altered linguistic landscape, conditioned by rapid globalization and an increasing multicultural awareness. Rudbecksgymnasiet is indeed no exception. In the spirit of the IB programme, we are moving toward a more inclusive take on cultural diversity, showing in a continuously expanding repertoire of mother tongue languages taught at our

¹ ‘Mother tongue’ in this context is used in the same way as is stated on p. 16 of the document *Language and Learning in IB programmes*, International Baccalaureate Organization 2012. Hence, the term includes “the language learned first and/or the language identified with as a ‘native speaker’[...] “the language that the student uses at home and/or in the classroom environment”, while recognizing that the language profiles among students are diverse (p. 1), and that there are those who have more than just one ‘first language’ or even none. *Language and Learning in IB programmes*, International Baccalaureate Organization 2012, retrieved June 8th 2020 https://issuu.com/b.i.s./docs/language_and_learning_in_ib_programmes

² Ibid p. 3

³ Ibid p.7

school, international exchange programmes, and in 2009 we welcomed our first class to the Diploma Programme. In addition, we are pleased to see a growing interest among our students in studying modern languages as well as mother tongue as Language A self-taught. Thus, the additive bilingualism of the past is advancing to a new level of international-mindedness and a sound plurilingualism.

As most of us are aware, it is not entirely thanks to educational reform that we begin to see the emergence of a new generation of true cosmopolitan citizens “whose primary is to the community of human beings” rather than choosing the impasse of “ethnocentric particularism”⁴. Social Media with the Internet at its core has revolutionized the way we communicate with each other across the world, uniting us in all our disparity on shared platforms which make up what is sometimes referred to as the global village. This would never have happened were it not for the fact that we also share a common language, a lingua franca, which is currently to a dominant extent English. From the perspective of democratic and equal human rights, Rudbecksgymnasiet therefore aligns with the view that:

[w]hile there are strong educational arguments in favour of mother tongue (or first language) instruction, a careful balance also needs to be made between enabling people to use local languages in learning, and providing access to global languages of communication through education.⁵

This is not a concern exclusively for language teachers, but in a context where the learning takes place through language as a medium of instruction – which is the case in the IB-programme, language development opportunities should be offered across the entire curriculum. Hence, ultimately it is the concern of every subject teacher to ensure that students equally acquire an academic register which allows them access to the discourse characteristic of scholarly and scientific training. It is, simply put, a matter of empowerment.

⁴ Martha C Nussbaum, “Patriotism and cosmopolitanism”, *Boston Review*, October 1 1994

⁵ UNESCO, *Education in a multilingual world*, Education position paper, 2003, retrieved March 25, 2020 <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000129728>

Language Policy

Language is communication and in the global world of today our mother tongue, as well as a second or third language, is often used on a daily basis. It is therefore of utmost importance to stimulate and develop language skills in more than one language. A positive attitude towards bilingualism is the platform from which we further develop the language skills of students and staff alike.

Language is central to learning and therefore all teachers are, in practice, language teachers with responsibilities in facilitating language acquisition in all the taught subjects. Heads of school, teachers, librarians and supportive staff require professional support and development in the area of language teaching and language learning. IB workshops abroad are central for all types of staff to develop language skills as well as specific skills connected to the different roles of being a part of “the IB family” at school. The school library and media resources are closely linked to the IB programme. They play a crucial role in the acquisition of languages as well as the development of media literacy. All students are issued with digital devices to use during their three years at Rudbecksgymnasiet to enhance the process of using modern technology in the learning process. Students with special academic needs when it comes to language learning are catered for throughout the programme by inclusive practices by all teachers combined with close cooperation with Special needs professionals in the Student Health team. Examples of inclusive practices are special digital applications, extra time for test- and exam situations and individual study plans based on the individual student’s needs.

At Rudbecksgymnasiet we are proud to welcome students from many different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, many of whom are multilingual, speaking a variety of languages at home. In our school environment we ensure that both the Swedish and English languages are supported in and outside the classrooms. In the preparatory year a language profile is made of each student to guide and support the individual choices of subjects in the Diploma Program. Furthermore, in the preparatory year all students are introduced to IB specific terms and concepts, as well as targeted language teaching in specific subject terminology, aiming to provide students with a linguistically seamless transition into IB1 where said terminology is widely used.

We acknowledge and celebrate the fact that our multilingual students are not only valuable assets in promoting international mindedness, as they offer valuable perspectives to further cultural understanding, but also contribute to our commitment to creating open minded students with a curiosity for ideas and ways of thinking different from their own.

The language of instruction is English. Students also choose Swedish as a first or second language. To further support the learning of Swedish for non-native speakers, extra lessons are provided during the diploma years as well as during the preparatory year. This arrangement also makes non-native speakers qualified for higher studies at Swedish universities, where a documented knowledge of Swedish is a qualifying requirement. Students with other mother tongues than the above mentioned receive extra support in the form of classes to maintain and develop the skills in the language in question, taught by native speaking teachers. This support extends during the three years the students are registered at the school and is optional. To further develop the linguistic skills of our students Spanish, French, Italian and German are offered at beginner's level in the group 2 course "ab initio". International exchanges are an integrated part of the studies of foreign languages other than English.

In addition to the above, students can also choose their mother tongue as a self-taught option in group 1, during the Diploma Program. As Rudbecksgymnasiet is a non-fee-paying school, this possibility is free of charge for the students, and the cost for individual tutoring is carried within the program's budget. We recognize that this opportunity has recently grown in popularity as we have seen an increase in students from diverse language backgrounds, where self-taught offers them a valuable option for group 1 studies.

We also enable parents to take an active role in their children's learning different languages. Parents are invited several times during the preparatory year to share the school's language policy and receive information about the different choices regarding languages in the IB program.

It is essential that this language policy is a well-known working document which is constant discussed and adapted to changes in the school population or the needs of the surrounding community. Its content is by its nature dynamic and will be reviewed regularly.