



LANGUAGE POLICY

2024-2025



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TARBIYAH ACADEMY

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Language Philosophy

At Tarbiyah Academy, the Primary Years Programme (PYP) and Middle Years Programme (MYP) align with the International Baccalaureate (IB) curricular framework, supporting the IB's core concepts of holistic learning, intercultural awareness, and communication. Through language, students gain access to knowledge and make meaningful connections across subjects via Units of Inquiry, while also reflecting on the IB Learner Profile. We encourage students to explore multiple perspectives, learn about their own and other cultures, and appreciate world literature as part of their language development.

At Tarbiyah Academy, English is the primary language of instruction, while Arabic has been intentionally chosen as the additional language due to its profound significance in the Quran and its importance to Muslims. As an "American Muslim Leadership School," we strive to develop proficiency in both English and Arabic, equipping students to navigate and communicate effectively in both languages. Our curriculum reflects Islamic values and emphasizes the application of language skills beyond rote memorization, particularly in Arabic, where we focus on communication in both classical Arabic, for Quranic understanding, and Modern Standard Arabic for everyday use.

English instruction in the PYP and MYP follows the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) language progressions, enriched by experiences in reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and presenting through various media. Arabic instruction is based on ACTFL standards, tailored to each student's proficiency level.

The overarching focus is language as a means of exploration, expression, and communication. Clarity and accuracy of language as well as confidence of self-expression are fostered. In all subject areas, communication is both an objective and an assessment criterion as it facilitates understanding and student self-reflection.

Language is seen as a tool for exploration, expression, and communication. We foster clarity, accuracy, and confidence in self-expression, emphasizing communication across all subjects as both a learning objective and an assessment criterion. This approach enhances understanding and self-reflection.

We recognize that language underpins all learning. Students learn both through and about language, bringing their prior knowledge into the classroom and constructing meaning from their experiences. Given the diverse language readiness of our students, we value differentiated instruction that addresses multiple learning styles. Across all academic areas, we integrate listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and presenting, considering every teacher a language teacher. Language development is a shared responsibility among teachers, parents, and students.

Our teaching is driven by the belief that language fosters intercultural awareness, curiosity, and an appreciation for global diversity. Through language exploration, students grow into independent thinkers, responsible global citizens, and effective communicators in a multilingual world.

How Do Schools Teach Language?

Then & Now

The language classroom in the U.S has been transformed in the last 20 years to reflect an increasing emphasis on developing student's communicative competence. Unlike the traditional classroom that required students to know a great deal of information about a language, but not actually use the language to understand original classical texts, today's classroom is about teaching languages so that students use them to communicate with native speakers of the language and to be able to interact with texts written in this original language. This is what prepares them to use their language learning as a 21st Century Skill.

Table 1 on the next page is a comparison between traditional language classrooms and the innovative approach to language learning at Tarbiyah Academy:

Table 1

| Traditional Classrooms | Language Instruction at Tarbiyah Academy |
|---|---|
| Students learned about the language (grammar) | Students learn to use the language |
| Teacher-centered class | Learner-centered with teacher as facilitator/collaborator |
| Focused on isolated skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) | Focus on the three modes: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational |
| Coverage of a textbook | Backward design focusing on the end goal |
| Using a prefabricated non-Islamic based Arabic textbook as the curriculum | Use of thematic units and authentic resources. Units guided by important Islamic themes in Islamic History and the Qur'an. |
| Emphasis on teacher as presenter/lecturer | Emphasis on learner as “doer” and “creator” |
| Isolated cultural “factoids” | Emphasis on the relationship among the perspectives, practices, and products of the culture of the Arabs living during the time of the Prophet and how the Qur'an catered to their love of Arabic Poetry. |
| Use of technology as a “cool tool” | Integrating technology into instruction to enhance learning |
| Only teaching language | Using language as the vehicle to teach Islamic academic content in Islamic Studies and Qur'anic Studies |
| Same instruction for all students | Differentiating instruction to meet individual needs |
| Synthetic situations from textbook | Personalized real-world tasks that help our children apply their Islamic/Qur'anic learning in the real world. |
| Confining language learning to the classroom | Seeking opportunities for learners to use language beyond the classroom |
| Testing to find out what students don't know | Assessing to find out what students can do and know |
| Only the teacher knows criteria for grading | Students know and understand criteria on how they will be assessed by reviewing the task rubric |
| Students “turn in” work only for the teacher | Learners create to “share and publish” to audiences more than just the teacher. |

Modes of Communication

Tarbiyah Academy's Arabic and Qur'an instruction focuses on teaching students the entire language, not just its grammatical components. Students will be learning not only about language through grammar and vocabulary, but they will also learn about the world around them through the language of Arabic. This will be accomplished through 3 modes of communication suggested by the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Language (ACTFL):

- **Interpersonal Mode:** In the interpersonal mode, participants actively engage in oral and/or written communication, working together to negotiate meaning and ensure their message comes across clearly.
- **Interpretive Mode:** Interpretive mode is the ability to listen to or read a text and interpret the meaning.
- **Presentational Mode:** In this mode, communication is either written or oral and the presenter must consider the impact on the audience since this is one-way communication with limited opportunity for feedback.

Language of Instruction

At Tarbiyah Academy, English is the language of instruction for all subjects, except for Arabic, which is taught entirely in Arabic, and Quranic Studies, where Arabic is used to help students understand the meaning of the text. All students from KG to Grade 8 follow a rigorous English-medium language program aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). With high expectations for student success in both English and Modern Standard Arabic, students are given the opportunity to become fully biliterate in English and Arabic.

Beliefs and Practices of Language Instruction

All students are:

- Provided ample opportunity to read, write, listen, and speak across the curriculum.
- Taught literacy skills in context.
- Taught strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, respond, appreciate, and construct texts.
- Taught through, a variety of technological and information resources.
- Encouraged to express oneself orally and in writing, in a variety of media and situations.
- Encouraged to share and develop their work in a social context.
- Encouraged to see language as a tool for thinking, inquiring and learning.
- Encouraged to maintain and value their mother tongue and to value that of other students.
- Provided the opportunity to become proficient in more than one language.
- Exposed to a broad range of literature reflecting a variety of cultures and perspectives.
- Encouraged to develop a love of language and literature.
- Provided constructive and specific feedback from teachers and peers.
- Exposed to modelling of rich language experiences and are given time to reflect on their learning and applying techniques appropriately.

Language Instruction

All students are provided with constant opportunities to engage with language, both deliberately and organically, across various subjects. In ELA classes, the focus is on key literacy components such

as reading, writing, phonics, grammar, and vocabulary. Recognizing that communication encompasses more than just reading and writing, instruction also emphasizes speaking. Students regularly practice all three areas—reading, writing, and speaking—during class.

In PYP classrooms, ELA instructional periods follow the Daily 5 format, which encourages students to independently and regularly engage in reading, writing, and word work. This structure helps reinforce language skills and fosters greater independence in literacy development.

Assessments in language may be oral or written, allowing for diverse forms of expression. Additionally, students are taught to use technology as a tool to communicate their learning effectively.

Students in the PYP begin building foundational literacy skills from kindergarten through second grade, focusing on learning to read. As they transition from second to third grade, the emphasis shifts from learning to read to reading to learn, incorporating skills like research, presentations, word study, and understanding the root components to build and strengthen vocabulary skills.

In both PYP and MYP classrooms, dedicated spaces for classroom libraries support independent reading and literacy development. All subjects utilize language to convey content knowledge, meaning that every teacher is a language teacher. Students learn academic vocabulary to help them connect and communicate their understanding of key concepts across various subjects, such as math, art, science, and social studies.

Modern Standard Arabic

The school is committed to enabling students to achieve proficiency in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Arabic learning is facilitated through regular classes dedicated to language learning and language rich activities. All students in the Primary Years Programme and Middle Years Programme are required to learn Arabic. Students receive high quality Arabic instruction that aims to prepare students to ensure fluency in Arabic reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Additional coursework in Qur’anic Studies is also delivered through native Arabic speaking staff.

To teach and assess MSA, teachers use the National Standards for 21st Century Language Learning which is organized in the following categories:

- Interpersonal (Person-to-Person) Communication
- Presentational Speaking (Spoken Production)
- Presentational Writing (Written Production)
- Interpretive Listening
- Interpretive Reading

At the beginning of each year, PYP and MYP teachers use Can-Do Statements based on the categories above to pre-assess each student’s knowledge of Modern Standard Arabic into one of the below levels:

- Novice Low, Mid, or High
- Intermediate Low, Mid, or High

These Can-Do Statements describe the specific language tasks that learners are likely to perform at various levels of proficiency.

Each week, students are given spelling lists with vocabulary relevant to their units of study. They interact with these words in different ways, in speaking, writing, reading, and listening and are assessed weekly in the correct usage.

Arabic Instruction in the MYP

In the MYP, each Arabic class consists of all students in the same grade level. However, the proficiency level of the students in Arabic varies with most of our students tending to have some familiarity with the language and a small number of our students either having no knowledge of the Arabic language or having greater proficiency.

Each Arabic class can have up to 3 levels (ex: Novice Low, Novice Mid, Intermediate Low). Teachers are encouraged to differentiate instruction so that all three levels receive engaging, relevant, significant and challenging instruction.

Our goal is to gradually increase the use of Arabic throughout the school year and across the grade levels. We understand that at the beginning of the year, some students may require a blend of English and Arabic, but we strive to progressively transition towards the exclusive use of Arabic.

Language for Communication and Learning in Arabic

To facilitate learning for all students, teachers are encouraged to use the following methods:

- using visual materials (graphic organizers) alongside oral instruction to deepen understanding
- using actions (Total Physical Response-TPR) alongside oral instructions
- reinforcing oral instructions with written instructions, or as hard copy
- emphasizing academic vocabulary specific to the subject
- actively using visible thinking strategies
- teaching the written conventions of the subject
- providing student-centered activities which allow students to explore ideas and concepts through dialog
- structuring tasks and scaffolding lessons and assignments to maximize every student's opportunity for success
- allowing students to give an oral response at times rather than a written task
- using language for reflection, either by journaling or in direct email contact with the teacher

Experiential Learning in Arabic

We believe that language instruction should provide authentic experiences where students can actively use the Arabic language in real-life contexts. In our PYP classrooms, the transdisciplinary nature of the units of inquiry enables teachers to collaborate and create opportunities for students to engage meaningfully with the language. In the MYP, these experiences typically happen in Arabic class and during Quran and Islamic Studies. Some examples of these authentic experiences include:

- PYP Exhibition
- Arabic Market
- Arabic Restaurant
- Cooking video
- Khutbah (Friday sermon)
- Special assembly presentations

Arabic Materials and Resources for Learning

All classrooms are equipped with a variety of Arabic texts that are easily accessible to students. Teachers utilize authentic Arabic workbooks, texts, and websites that gamify language learning, providing students with additional opportunities to practice and engage with the language.

Multimodal resources such as books, videos, and presentations are also used to enhance engagement. Additionally, the library includes a dedicated section with books in Arabic, further enriching students' language experience.

Mother Tongue Maintenance and Development

We believe that competence and confidence in the mother tongue are crucial for academic success, for the maintenance of cultural identity and for emotional stability. We believe that mother tongue competence aids learning of the language of learning and additional languages. We are committed to supporting families as far as possible in developing and maintaining the mother tongue of students throughout the school.

Most of our students are second- and third-generation immigrants. English is their native language (i.e. the language they think/dream with). A very small percentage of our students come from homes that speak another language at home (Arabic, Urdu or Turkish). Children who come from these homes can understand their mother tongue only in spoken mode. They cannot write/and or read it. A great majority of these students when assessed in Arabic can only speak Arabic in dialect (ex: Egyptian Arabic or Syrian Arabic). They cannot speak, write, or read Modern Standard Arabic. Students from non-Arabic households (Urdu or Turkish) identify English as their strongest language and not Urdu and/or Turkish. Even though a few parents speak Urdu/Turkish fluently, they enroll their children at Tarbiyah Academy to learn Arabic. For many of our families, Arabic is seen as the key to understanding religious texts. Families enroll their children at Tarbiyah Academy mainly to learn more about their faith through the Arabic language. Hence, the instruction of Arabic has two sometimes divergent goals – the reading and understanding of religious texts such as Quran through Qur’anic Arabic and the reading and understanding of Modern Standard Arabic. Often, Quranic Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic can be different.

English for Academic Purposes

All PYP teachers recognize that language – which includes spoken, written and visual language - is central to learning. We also recognize that a major task for *all* teachers at this level is the teaching of English for academic purposes.

Students are provided with experiences to help them develop their communication and learning in English. Teachers build units and introduces students to the academic vocabulary

Other Opportunities for Language Development

Beyond classroom learning, students at Tarbiyah Academy engage in numerous activities that support their language development. In the MYP, participation in the Student Government Association (SGA) allows students to practice public speaking through presentations, debates, and campaign speeches. The SGA also develops bylaws and agreements to govern their meetings. Additionally, students address the school community and serve as guest speakers in PYP classes.

MYP students further enhance their language skills by writing and delivering *khutbahs* (sermons) on various religious topics, integrating their knowledge of Arabic, Quran, and Islamic Studies. Similarly, during special assemblies, students present on topics of their choice as well as subjects relevant to different areas of study.

In the classroom, essential agreements are co-created with teacher guidance, and students take turns leading the morning assembly, incorporating both Arabic and English. Biweekly House Meetings provide MYP students with leadership roles, as they organize and guide the student body through various tasks.

To develop literacy, teachers regularly read aloud from challenging texts, modeling fluent reading. This encourages students to ask and answer higher order thinking questions, building their ability to discuss and reflect on what they learn. Students also participate in events such as the PYP Exhibition, the MYP Community Project, and the Middle School Talent Show, where they present their work to an audience. Future opportunities may include student-created "TED Talks" to share their ideas with a wider audience.

Translanguaging & Other Languages

Tarbiyah Academy students and staff are encouraged and applauded for flexibly switching between languages. We encourage our students to become multilingual and we aim to create a space where students feel safe using and expressing themselves in any language they wish. When English or Arabic skills and usage are not being assessed, our students are permitted to complete their work products in any language they wish. We will honor all languages that our student and staff bodies are literate in, speak, are exposed to, or are learning. We will make these efforts through the following measures:

- offering extracurricular language learning activities such as a "French Club" or "Conversational Urdu".
- displaying environmental print in languages that represent our student and staff backgrounds.
- incorporating the learning of basic greetings, counting, and vocabulary in other languages.
- teaching language learning within the framework of Communication Skills and the Learner Profile attribute, Communicator.
- permitting and promoting the expression of learning in any language.
- Accommodating for families who are not native English speakers (conferences, communication, etc.)