



Language Policy

AARHUS
GYMNASIUM

Being different is what brings us together

In our 2020 Language Survey, we asked our students why it is important to learn languages. One statement in particular sums up why language teaching and learning is so important in this day and age:

Learning new languages is important for broadening your horizons and know new cultures. This makes us more open-minded and considerate of others and other cultures.

As world citizens, it is incumbent upon us to improve our language development and literacy to be able to study the cultures and the people of these languages since language, culture, and people are all interconnected. Given the wide spectrum of nationalities, cultural backgrounds and languages at Aarhus Gymnasium, Tilst (AGT), we are well on our way to meeting that mandate. Though our main languages of instruction are Danish and English intertwined with these are a sweet cacophony of a multitude of voices: walking down our hallways one hears Arabic, Somali, Vietnamese, French, and German being spoken.

Outsiders to AGT may choose to focus on our differences. However, at our school, our community comes together because of these differences and the tolerance we share. At the heart of this tolerance is language learning and teaching. Because, as our student said: "This makes us more open-minded and considerate."

At AGT, we embrace our multilingualism and multiculturalism, and it is our vision and mission to support and promote all languages spoken by our students and staff and to support our teachers in their contribution to the language development of our students. This policy is our statement of purpose and practices for achieving these goals.

A focus on mother tongue

Any student who qualifies to take the School-Supported Self-Taught (SSST) Language A Literature course and wishes to take up this challenge of independent study can do so at AGT. Taking this course gives the students an opportunity to study the literature of their favored language even if this language is not offered as part of our school programme. Students may choose to do take the SSST course because they wish to return to the target country to study, or simply to develop a familiarity with the literature of this country and the skills required to study it. In either case, we support these endeavors.

The school's SSST supervisor meets regularly with the SSST students and offers guidance on issues such as the overall structure and assessment of the course, a suggestion of books

to include on the book-list, help for developing a timeline, and general skills for analysis and interpretation of literature.

In addition to the SSST supervisor, SSST students are also assigned a tutor proficient in the target language. This person helps in language specific areas where the SSST supervisor may not be able to. The tutor can prove particularly helpful when students are preparing for assessment components, and/or when they are needing feedback on mock exams.

To find inspiration for their book lists SSST students can browse the school's own library books, which represent languages at AGT other than Danish and English, or they can visit our university and/or public libraries working with respective librarians.

A focus on Danish

Just as it is important for students to speak English during IB classes, it is also crucial that they are given the opportunity to become competent in the language of the country in which they reside. IB students at AGT whose mother tongue is Danish, or who have a fluent command of the language, are encouraged to take Danish A. All other students seeking to improve their Danish skills are encouraged to take either Danish ab initio or Danish B.

A focus on other languages

Within Group 1, the *Studies in Language and Literature* subject group, we offer Danish A Literature, English A Literature, English A Language and Literature as well as School-Supported Self-Taught Language A Literature. In Group 2, the *Language Acquisition* subject group, the students can choose between Danish ab initio, Danish B, English B, German B, French ab initio and Spanish ab initio.

A special subject offered to our pre-IB students is **general linguistics**. General linguistics is a joint collaboration between the subjects English, Danish and a second foreign language: French, German, or Spanish. The aim of general linguistics is to develop the students' awareness of language and to make them skilled users of language. This is done by:

- showing the relationship between languages historically and contemporarily
- introducing the students to basic international concepts of grammar
- presenting the students to different kinds of linguistic exercises
- pointing to the importance of language in social and cultural contexts
- encouraging the students to the develop learning strategies

A focus on language teaching and learning

Because we believe that learning a new language supports our students in their process of becoming world citizens and achieving intercultural understanding, AGT aims to offer as wide a range of language choices as possible. While learning languages our students also learn about the cultures and literature of the countries in which they are spoken. In our language classes we start with what the students already know.

We encourage active learning by using methods of teaching that promote curiosity, discussion, collaboration, and reflection in order to gain a high level of student involvement.

Our language teachers collaborate closely using both informal conversations in the staff room, as well as more formal subject group meetings and shared unit plans on our information platform. Whether formal or informal, the meetings serve to maximize inspiration, insight, and information on vital aspects of the IB programme, such as Approaches to Teaching and Learning and ways to implement and integrate TOK, CAS and the Learner Profile. These meetings also serve as platforms where teachers can share both successes and failures in order to support each other in becoming the best language teachers possible.

A focus on our students

We aim to make our students the center of all teaching, not only in our language classes, because our students are our most important resource in our continual development towards becoming the best we can be. Our teachers lay the groundwork through good teaching using their strong professional and academic skills, but our students enhance this with their long experience as learners and their self-insight. Thus, we require that the Language Committee include at least two student members; this ensures that the student voice is heard on matters related to language teaching and learning at AGT.

The agenda of the Language Committee mandates that the school plans activities which promote and/or integrate language teaching and/or language awareness.

All teachers are language teachers

As an international school AGT recognizes that all teachers are language teachers and should do whatever they can to help students improve their language and communication

skills. This is essential if we want students equipped with effective tools of communication in all subjects and all aspects of life.

Action plan for the Language Committee

- Plan more activities to promote languages teaching and language awareness at AGT. The recent language survey offered good suggestions:
 - Language clubs (Somali, for instance / Language exchange clubs)
 - Language Day / event (similar to International Day)
 - Language booth at International Day: come learn important phrases in a variety of languages
 - Songs from different cultures scheduled to play between class meetings: students can sign up for 'Korean', 'Thai', 'Somali' music, etc.
 - Visual markers in the school: posters, banners, flags, jokes, exhibitions
- A handbook of fun and educational exercises / units for language teachers (among others based on some of the student suggestions on the 2020 survey)
- Conduct a new language survey in the 2021-2022 school year, attempting to map out the number of languages spoken at AGT. (High response rate is required.)