

Language Policy

Introduction

Montessori Cordoba International School is an English Immersion Programme for 0–6-year-olds and a Bilingual English and Spanish Programme for 6-12-year-olds. Part of our mission is to offer the children a global, international vision of the world and for them to grow knowing that they are part of a global community. For this reason, supporting our children to be bilingual and preparing an environment where the community feels comfortable in multilingual situations is one of our guiding principles.

As most of our students have Spanish as a first language the following objectives apply to these children. In the case of children who have other language profiles, adaptations are made according to an individual language profile/plan (See SEN policy).

Language Use around School

Our teaching faculty (guides and assistants) are all bilingual English and Spanish speakers, staff meetings are held in English unless we have a speaker who does not have confidence in their ability to communicate clearly in English. A few members of staff may need additional support in staff meetings when using either language if topics use complex or specialised vocabulary. This support usually occurs naturally with other staff members translating.

Admin staff use Spanish or English depending on the fluency of the person they are communicating with.

Communications to families on a whole school level are usually in Spanish so that they can be understood by all parents. We have considered reverting to English but when we have sent an English communication, we have received some complaints and also a curious refusal in some cases, to learn how to use online translating services. This may be something we will trial again in upcoming years. Class communications to families are generally sent in English and Spanish, although as each Guide knows their own class community there may be groups in which communicating in English only is fine.

Communications between school staff are usually in English, especially between teaching faculty. Communications with non-teaching staff are often in Spanish.

Our record keeping tool, **Transparent Classroom**, is set by each user to be in a selection of languages including Spanish or English, however it does not translate written observations or trackers which are individually written to the user's language.

The **language profile of teaching faculty** is that guides are fluent English speakers or Spanish speakers with sufficient English knowledge to use English with confidence and clarity in all communications with children. This is variable; Infant Community Guides may have a lower level than Elementary Guides for example. Assistants in Infant Community and Children's House have the same profile as the guides, whilst in Elementary it is important that the assistants are fluent Spanish speakers and preferably Spanish Primary school teachers. This enables us to support children correctly in their Spanish academic development.

Language objectives in the Infant Community

During their time in the Infant Community children are provided a language rich environment in English. All presentations and their daily routine are managed with Guides and Assistants speaking English. When children transition to Children's House they are comfortable with English as a day-to-day medium of communication, they understand everyday vocabulary and instructions, and know songs and some favourite stories in English. In most cases children can also produce English words or short phrases when they transition to Children's House although this is in large part dependent on their general stage of language development.

Language objectives in Children's House

During their time in Children's House children continue to be provided with a language rich environment in English. All presentations and their daily routine are managed with Guides and Assistants speaking English. Their vocabulary continues to expand, and production of English usually enters a stage, at sometime between 3 and 5 years of age, which enables conversations with guides and assistants to take place in English, however there may be exceptions still. In Children's House children follow the pink, blue and green series in the sequence shown in annex 1, this sequence has been adapted from the AMI sequence to better support second language learners.. It is desirable for children to be working on the green series before entering the second plane of development. Children who are ready start on levelled reading work from Raz Kids and also may access the Elementary I levelled reading system. Unlike monolingual Montessori programmes we do not start grammar work in Children's House as we spend more time developing oral language

Exceptions to use of English in 0-6 environments

Until children reach a level of English comprehension that allows them to access the following, guides and assistants may use Spanish when:

- during settling-in period when children are anxious and insecure in their new environment
- when dealing with situations where social and/or emotional support or guidance is the priority
- when giving a key instruction where misinterpretation could be a danger to child or to others
- when a child has a language plan which indicates otherwise

Language objectives in Elementary

Elementary children receive part of their instruction in Spanish. However, 90% of the instruction and interactions with students still happen in English. Spanish is only used to deliver Spanish language, Spanish history, and Spanish geography (As required by local law).

English

Children finishing their Elementary education with us should have a level of proficiency in English which enables them to continue their academic education in English. This objective only applies to children whose home language is not English if they start their education here by or before age 5. Children with this language profile who enrol later than this have individualised English language objectives which are recorded and adjusted each year on their individualised language plan.

Spanish

Children finishing their Elementary education with us should have a level of proficiency in Spanish which enables them to continue their academic education in Spanish. This objective only applies to children whose home language is not Spanish if they start their education here by or before age 5. Children with this language profile who enrol later than this have individualised Spanish language objectives which are recorded and adjusted each year on their individualised language plan.

Whilst bilingual academic proficiency is our preferred outcome, many children have an individual language profile and expectations must be shared with families. That said, we also recognise that language development and ability in young children is highly individual, and it is very difficult to predict children's improvement any further than a year in advance. Whilst one child may be very slow in producing English and then suddenly produce rich, varied vocabulary and structures; another child may use words freely but improve very slowly. We use admissions meetings, new student meetings with guides and ongoing tutorials to support parents in understanding the complexity of language learning in an immersion environment. In these moments and some specific workshops on developing bilingualism we explain the difference between children who are explicitly taught English in a constructive way (EAL teaching and support) and those who absorb the language from their environment.

Overview of Elementary English work

This section gives an overview of the 4 key skills and how our Elementary environments are prepared to foster development in each

Listening and speaking

Listening and speaking English are acquired through our immersion program and are not explicitly taught to all through ESL instruction sessions. Support is given in specific presentations to those with an individual language plan who require extra support, either due to late starting or another reason.

The Montessori Elementary classroom allows many opportunities throughout the day for speaking in English. We recognise that children will improve listening skills before their speaking skills. One of the challenges of the language profile of Montessori Cordoba is that Spanish is the most common shared language, so whilst children's conversation with guides and assistants is usually in English, when children work with others without the guide or assistant it is natural for their conversation to be in Spanish. This means we need to encourage opportunities for conversation in English among peers. Guides provide extra materials on the shelves for structured vocabulary and conversation practice which children can choose as part of their English language work.

Assemblies and circle times also provide opportunities for children to listen and respond in English. In groups with higher-level, more confident English speakers it is a good idea for those children to contribute first as it provides a natural language model for others and sets the tone for an English conversation. Children often translate or provide missing vocabulary if their classmate struggles at some point.

When it is considered helpful, guides provide some sentence structure support to help children participate in conversation. This may involve practicing beforehand with the teacher individually or in a group, having access to a prompt card or having the structure written on a flipboard/whiteboard.

We recognise that having other English language models in the classroom apart from the guide and assistant provides more opportunities for children to practice their speaking and listening skills. Montessori Córdoba aims to attract children whose first language is not Spanish through admissions and some special considerations aimed at stimulating the enrolment of children whose first language is not Spanish.

Reading

At Montessori Cordoba we are aware that extra time and attention is needed to develop literacy skills of children whose home language is not English. In order to develop to a level where reading in English would be freely chosen, most children need to understand that reading in English is an obligatory activity in their work guides/journals.

We have three progressive reading schemes in Elementary at Montessori Cordoba. The lower-level books are levelled readers with engage literacy. These are generally used with children in Elementary I. We also use the Talisman Series are used in Elementary II with children who need extra support with reading and spelling. Talisman is high interest - low level and are useful in supporting older children with a low English level, usually due to late entry to our programme. Once children are ready, they move to novels that are organised by accelerated readers scores starting from 3.0. This

allows children choice in the books they choose to read while ensuring that the books they choose are appropriate to their level.

When preparing our environments for developing reading skills we recognise the importance of developing fluidity, comprehension, and analysis. For children who are using levelled readers, small group readings happen three times a week in each class - twice with an adult (which encourages English only conversation about the book) and at least once with a peer. During these sessions, children take turns reading and together they ask questions based on the Bloom's taxonomy reading questions (see resources on Drive) to ensure children are using all their higher order thinking skills in the discussion. Children often choose to do follow up work from their books including making their own books, comic strips of the story or a piece of artwork.

Older students with a higher reading level have a weekly literature circle. They work in groups to choose a title that appeals to them. They agree on how many chapters to read for the next meeting, and they work together to assign each member of the group a role. Roles include: summariser, question maker, illustrator, word detective. Children are responsible for reading the agreed part of the book and producing the work based on their role and bringing it to the following meeting. Children meet once a week and have a discussion based on the work they have done in their different roles. They finish the meeting by assigning new roles and agreeing how much they will read for the next meeting. Literature circles are effective for encouraging comprehension and analysis while also promoting autonomy and motivation.

We acknowledge that fostering a love of reading is also an important part of the role of the guide. One way we do this is by giving children the freedom to read in the library when they want to. Books are available in L1 and L2. After lunch each day children also spend time silent reading which supports children in developing a good reading habit and also experience the pleasure of reading as a relaxing individual activity. The love of reading is also fostered by read aloud. Guides in each class read to their class every day in English while children relax and listen to the story. This allows for extra exposure to English and also stimulates discussion around comprehension and plot analysis.

Writing

In the Elementary classrooms reading and writing skills are essential for students to be able to engage in cosmic education and the creation of big works. Guides use a variety of materials to support writing skills in all areas of the curriculum. E.g., providing writing frames for science experiments, reports etc. These writing frames scaffold writing skills and are gradually removed as the children's level progresses.

The mechanics of writing are taught through the mechanics of writing sequence. The skills learned in these presentations are practised independently and then incorporated into writers' workshop presentations. In Elementary I, writing practice is incorporated into writing reports, investigations, planning events, science reports. In Elementary II these writing opportunities continue, but with an additional weekly writers' workshop. These workshops cover different genres ranging from poetry to newspaper reports to creative writing. Guides follow their own sequence to cover these genres and make the most of opportunities to teach them as they arise in the classroom (e.g, letter writing is taught when the children wish to write a letter to the director about changing school menu). These workshops are influenced by the ideas of Ros Wilson who designed Big Writing. She recognised that children need to talk lots about an idea before writing about it. Writers' workshops are structured so children spend time in the first work cycle discussing what they will write and then the second work cycle actually writing it. Success criteria for each child's piece of writing is based on their individual ability. Writing is then self-assessed by the child against their success criteria. (See resources in Drive)

Follow up work is expected to be completed in English when a child has received the presentation in English, unless the child has an individualised language profile/plan which indicates otherwise.

Additional areas for literacy development

Grammar

At Montessori Cordoba each guide follows the grammar series in their album which covers word study, parts of speech and sentence analysis (See resources in Drive for sequence order). We find the grammar symbols engaging and supportive of children learning L2.

Spelling

In the transition from Children's House to Elementary some children will continue with the pink, blue green series as detailed in the section above. This allows children to build on and consolidate their learning of the phonics series from children's house. While we acknowledge that this is appropriate for children moving to a new stage of classroom, we also have learned that there reaches a point when it is not beneficial for older children to continue with these presentations as it can affect their self-esteem to appear to be working on younger materials and also the level of repetition required can be tedious for children on the second plane of development. The guide should use their best judgement to determine when and if this transition is required.

In elementary we use a spelling system based on 'Words their Way' methodology. The children work with different words each week at their individualised level, and this is an obligatory activity in their work journals/guides. They can practise spelling the words the way they prefer - games, colouring, write, copy, check. At least once a week they have a dictation with an adult to see if they are ready to move to the next list. Children can ask for a dictation sooner than weekly if they believe they are ready to move to the next word list. In addition to the 'Words their way' words children also have three sight words on their list taken from the standardised lists of 500 most common words (see resources in Drive)

ESL support

At Montessori Cordoba we are aware of both the benefits and challenges of learning in a bilingual Montessori environment. We acknowledge that the guide should be aware of the differing needs of EAL learners, and that extra input is required to support children to succeed in their second language. At Montessori Córdoba we support children by:

- Using additional materials created by the guides to enhance vocabulary in L2. These activities are sequential and can be used by a child independently or with a peer.
- Using EAL textbook or online EAL resources to support the teaching of basic sentence structures and grammar points.
- Providing additional presentation and materials on EAL grammar such as tenses so that children have the opportunity to incorporate these skills into their use of English.
- Using additional materials, created by the guides, to support conversation between students in L2.
- If a child enters the environment with little or no English that child receives daily input from the guide or assistant to support initial transition. These children are also encouraged to attend additional English classes outside of the school.

Assessment guidelines

Children's House

In Children's house assessment in the development of reading and writing is ongoing, a child's progress and objectives are reflected in the guide's observations and record-keeping.

Elementary

Internal assessment of literacy skills is done at the start and end of each academic year to ensure student progression and a consistent approach between faculty.

Listening and Speaking

Listening and speaking skills are assessed by the guide through informal observation and note taking. Guides will assess constantly the levels of their students and create opportunities to support them in the classroom. For example, a child may speak well but consistently use the past tense incorrectly. On observation of this the guide will do a presentation on the past tense and provide the child with opportunities to work with past tense verbs. This supports the incorporating of the past tense into the child's English-speaking skills.

Spelling

At the beginning of each school year students' spelling is assessed using a standardised spelling assessment dictation according to a child's age and stage. This is used to determine the phonological awareness and knowledge of sight words. This allows the guide to start them working with the correct spelling list.

Reading

The reading level of each child in Elementary is assessed at the start of the school year. This allows teachers to assess levels and see progression. Children are assessed using the Raz Kids assessment texts which provide an accelerated reader score. This allows guides to individually match each child to their correct levelled reader level or accelerated reader novels. Once the correct level has been identified each of these reading systems allows children choice within their level. When a teacher believes a child is ready to move up a level, they should use the assessment text to check.

Writing

Writing assessment is ongoing. During writing tasks feedback is only given on the success criteria of the tasks. If guides observe during these activities repeated spelling, handwriting or punctuation errors they are noted by the guides and a specific presentation is given in a different moment to teach these skills. This is to ensure children feel confident in their writing skills; over correction can affect their writing confidence. In Elementary II each writing task is self-assessed using agreed success criteria for each task.

ESL level

Children in Elementary are assessed at the start of each academic year for their ESL level. This is used to inform the long-term language objectives for the child and these objectives are shared with the families in the December tutorials, so they have a realistic expectation of their child's progress. Our classroom guides are also TEFL teachers and use their own knowledge and resources to assess these levels.

Overview of Elementary Spanish work

Our Spanish coordinator creates and implements a curriculum based on the local requirements in the areas of Spanish Language, Spanish Geography and Spanish History.

We have a full curriculum document which isolated the parts of the curriculum which are not covered in the Montessori curriculum. So, for example children will not cover land formations in Spanish as they will have worked on this in English.

This year our Spanish coordinator will create a new Spanish language policy and programme.

The Spanish coordinator spends one hour each day in each Elementary environment doing presentations from the Spanish curriculum. These may use Montessori materials where appropriate and may also use other support materials. Children with Spanish as a first language initiate their formal lessons in Spanish literacy when their English literacy skills are consolidated, until that time their work in Spanish is oral and may include read aloud from the Spanish coordinator followed by comprehension questions. There is a Spanish language area in the communal space between the two EI classrooms where the Spanish language materials are stored. Work can be done in this area or taken into the classrooms to work with. Assistants support the children's Follow Up work in Spanish and also record observations from this follow up work with the coordinator so that these observations of needs maybe included in the coordinators planning.

Assessment of Spanish Language Development

The Spanish language coordinator is responsible for ongoing assessment of Spanish, these include an initial evaluation (Editor: EOS) at the start of each academic year for each child. From these initial assessments each child is set individual objectives for the year.

Assessment and record keeping

In previous years individual language plans have been kept by guides in folders in paper format and record keeping was done on Montessori Compass. This year, we are changing to Transparent Classroom and we are exploring the possibility of storing assessment information on this platform.

Annex 1

Bird eye view of Children’s House Language Sequence at MC compared to AMI monolingual sequence

	AMI	Montessori Cordoba
Oral Language	<p>Naming objects in the environment Vocabulary for the Sensorial Materials Classified Cards Vocabulary for Social Relations Classified Cards: Things that go Together Classified Cards: Biological Classification Classified Cards: Life Cycles</p> <p>Storytelling Reading Books Poems Conversation News Period Bulletin Board Orientation Game Question Game Oral Grammar Games Cultural Folders</p>	<p>Object-Picture Matching Sequencing Cards Vocabulary for Social Relations Classified Cards: Things that go together Classified Cards: Life Cycles</p> <p>Storytelling Reading Books Conversation</p>
Writing	<p>Sound Games Sandpaper Letters Sandpaper Phonograms Moveable Alphabet Metal Insets Map Making Sand Tray Chalkboards Handwriting on Paper Sorting Sandpaper Letters Handwriting Charts Book Making</p>	<p>Sound Games (“I spy”) Sandpaper Letters Red Group Sandpaper Letters Yellow Group Sandpaper Letters Purple Group Sandpaper Letters Orange Group Sandpaper Letters Black Group Sandpaper Letters White Group Beginning Sound Sorting Red Group Beginning Sound Sorting Yellow Group Beginning Sound Sorting Purple Group Beginning Sound Sorting Orange Group Beginning Sound Sorting Black Group Beginning Sound Sorting White Group Moveable Alphabet Metal Insets Sand Tray Chalkboards Handwriting on Paper Handwriting Charts Book Making Small Moveable Alphabet</p>
Reading	<p><u>Phonetic Reading:</u> Object Box 1 Phonetic Reading Cards Phonetic Commands</p>	<p><u>Pink Series:</u> First Lesson on Reading Alphabet Line CVC 3-part-cards</p>



	<p>Phonetic Booklets Rhyming Words</p> <p><u>Phonograms:</u> Object Box 2 Phonogram Booklets Phonogram Cards Phonogram Commands Research Spelling Dictionary/Personal Dictionary Puzzle Words</p> <p><u>Reading Classification:</u> Labelling the environment Cards with Labels Definition Stages</p> <p><u>Reading Analysis:</u> Stage 1 Stage 2 Stage 3</p> <p>Interpretive Reading</p>	<p>Phonetic Object-Word Matching Phonetic Picture-word matching Sight Words - 1st set Phonetic Phrases Phonetic Short Sentences Phonetic Long Sentences Phonetic Books</p> <p><u>Blue Series:</u> Consonant Blends Object-word matching Consonant Blends Picture-word matching Sight words - 2 set Consonant Blends Short Sentences Consonant Blends Long Sentences</p> <p><u>Green Series:</u> Green Sandpaper Letters Phonogram Picture-word matching Phonogram Object-word matching Phonogram Short Sentences Phonogram Long Sentences</p> <p><u>Levelled Reading:</u> Sight Words Level aa Level A Level B Level C</p>
<p>Grammar</p>	<p><u>Functions of Words</u> Articles Adjectives The Logical Adjective Game The Detective Game Conjunctions Prepositions Verbs Adverbs The Logical Adverb Game Continuation of commands The Symbol and Phrase Game</p> <p><u>Word Study</u> Generic Presentation Compound Words Suffixes Prefixes Word Families Adjectives</p>	<p>Children start on the grammar sequence in Elementary</p>