

EMMANUEL COLLEGE  
THE MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT  
Philosophical Statement



“Monolingualism is the illiteracy of the twenty-first century.” (Roberts, Leite and Wade, 2018.)

Foreign languages have a vital and indispensable role to play in the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum. Igniting students’ curiosity and love of other cultures and equipping them with the tools to express their own ideas in another language is a precious opportunity, to be highly valued by all.

Through teaching a language in its cultural context, which includes studying literature and providing opportunity to visit the country concerned, students experience a different culture first-hand. The ability to engage with another culture liberates us from narrow-mindedness, makes us curious and, consequently, deepens our understanding of the world. Every language provides a unique insight into other ways of living and thinking from which we can learn. Through this process, barriers are broken down and co-operation, community and mutual understanding are enhanced:

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.” (Nelson Mandela.)

Whilst the acquisition of knowledge underpins every stage of the journey in mastering a foreign language, it is intrinsically intertwined with the development of core communicative skills, enabling an individual to both understand and communicate confidently in another tongue; one cannot exist without the other. As students progress, they increasingly articulate with greater fluency, creativity, and accuracy. This process involves students manipulating language and applying it in new contexts to express their own viewpoints. The potential of foreign languages, therefore, as a vehicle for expressing one’s ideas must not be underestimated; the ability to analyse and evaluate ideas in a foreign tongue is truly awe-inspiring!

Studying a language has an intrinsic value in its own right; along with developing communicative skills, mastery of grammatical structures develops thinking and problem-solving skills. Moreover, the study of grammar and syntax develops one’s sense of precision; inappropriate and clumsy expression is challenged, highlighting the importance of clear, good communication.

Helping prepare students gain meaningful employment and develop in their careers is, and ought to be, a key objective of education. Currently, there is a huge demand for suitably qualified linguists, clearly stated in the British Council’s recent report *Languages For The Future*: “All should recognise that the UK’s language deficit remains a threat to our overall international competitiveness, influence and standing in the world, as well as to our citizens’ ability to play a meaningful role in the global economy in an increasingly networked world”. Enabling students to thrive and succeed in a truly globalised world, therefore, remains one of the key contributions of foreign languages to the school curriculum.