

Handout 1: Extracts from National Curricula for English

1. Basic Education Core Curriculum, Thailand

Learning Area of Foreign Languages

Why it is necessary to learn foreign languages

In the present global society, learning foreign languages is very important and essential to daily life, as foreign languages serve as an important tool for communication, education, seeking knowledge, livelihood and creating understanding of cultures and visions of the world community. Foreign languages enable learners to be aware of diversity of cultures and viewpoints in the world community, conducive to friendship and cooperation with various countries. They contribute to learners' development by giving learners better understanding of themselves and others. The learners are thus able to learn and understand differences of languages and cultures, customs and traditions, thinking, society, economy, politics and administration. They will be able to use foreign languages for communication as well as for easier and wider access to bodies of knowledge, and will have vision in leading their lives.

The foreign language constituting basic learning content that is prescribed for the entire basic education core curriculum is English, while for other foreign languages, e.g., French, German, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Pali and languages of neighbouring countries, it is left to the discretion of educational institutions to prepare courses and provide learning management as appropriate.

What is learned in foreign languages

The learning area for foreign languages is aimed at enabling learners to acquire a favourable attitude towards foreign languages, the ability to use foreign languages for communicating in various situations, seeking knowledge, engaging in a livelihood and pursuing further education at higher levels. Learners will thus have knowledge and understanding of stories and cultural diversity of the world community, and will be able to creatively convey Thai concepts and culture to the global society.

2. National Curriculum Framework for English, India

English in India is a global language in a multilingual country. A variety and range of English-teaching situations prevail here owing to the twin factors of teacher proficiency in English and pupils' exposure to English outside school. The level of introduction of English is now a matter of political response to people's aspirations rather than an academic or feasibility issue, and people's choices about the level of its introduction in the curriculum will have to be respected, with the proviso that we do not extend downwards the very system that has failed to deliver.

English does not stand alone. The aim of English teaching is the creation of multilinguals who can enrich all our languages; this has been an abiding national vision. English needs to find its place along with other Indian languages in different states, where children's other languages strengthen English teaching and learning; and in "English-medium" schools, where other Indian languages need to be valorised to reduce the perceived hegemony of English. The relative

success of "English medium" schools shows that language is learnt when it is not being taught as language, through exposure in meaningful contexts. Thus English must be seen in relation to other subjects; a language across the curriculum is of particular relevance to primary education, and later all teaching is in a sense language teaching. This perspective will bridge the gap between "English as subject" and "English as medium". We should in this way move towards a common school system that does not make a distinction between "teaching a language" and "using a language as a medium of instruction".

Within the eight years of education constitutionally guaranteed to every child, it should be possible to achieve basic English language proficiency in a span of about four years. A multilingual approach to schooling from the very outset will counter possible ill effects such as loss of one's own languages and the burden of sheer incomprehension.