

SASAH and Language Learning

At SASAH, our goal is to support students in developing the skills they need to participate in our global community. The SASAH program has a strong commitment to language learning alongside the many other skills and capabilities we emphasise. We therefore require all students to demonstrate a knowledge of a language other than English at the first-year level or above.

Ten reasons why we value language learning at SASAH.

1. Knowing more than one language is an undeniable career-building asset for our SASAH graduates, whether they are directly entering the job market in today's global economic community or seeking entry into graduate programs in which a second language is an advantage or a requirement.
2. At SASAH, we encourage and support international experiential learning. This experience is more meaningful and enriching if students have some knowledge of the language of the communities they are visiting.
3. Language is the medium of so much of the creative and intellectual work we do in SASAH, yet we all learn our first language so early that we can't even remember having done so. Our language seems 'natural', when in fact it has a huge cultural component. When we make the effort to learn other languages, we gain a deep understanding of our own language as part of the culture we make and that makes us in turn.
4. Learning other languages makes us better users of our own language. Because we develop the skills to analyze how language works, we become better writers, readers, listeners and speakers of language in general.
5. We gain deeper appreciation of cultures other than our own through language learning. The experience presents us with many wonderful and mind-expanding moments when we realize that another language has a way of expressing things for which we have no words in our first language.
6. Language learning is an opportunity for ethical development. It potentially puts us in a place of humility. As English speakers, we are privileged in a world where English is the dominant language of many institutions and economic transactions. When we make the effort to learn another language, we experience directly what it is to have to express ourselves in a language that does not come 'naturally' to us. This is an experience common to many people in our communities, both locally and internationally, who must learn English in addition to their native language. We learn about our own position in the structures of privilege and we also become more aware of how we as individuals manage our own awkwardness and discomfort.

7. Learning the language of another culture is one way to demonstrate care and intentionality in being attentive to that culture and in seeking to understand it as fully as we can.
8. Language learning as an activity builds community, both in class and beyond. It is an opportunity to have fun and it creates bonds with others when we practice conversation in a new language together.
9. Language learning cultivates intellectual and personal discipline. There is a unique rhythm to the effort required to learn a language. The regular attention required for language learning teaches us how to build productive structures and routines that will benefit us in all kinds of other activities as well.
10. Learning a language improves our creativity, cognitive functioning, memory, and skills in problem-solving and critical thinking.*

*Research cited by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.
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