



ÉDITO:

Dear parents' pupils,

Let us **set the terms of an essential debate to our school: the one about our pupils' French, English and Mandarin learning process, the ambition we can give our pupils regarding their language mastering at the end of their school life**, and reality that lies behind the word "trilinguism".

We know it, it is a topic that concerns all of you, even if the wonderings are essentially about mandarin learning. Bilinguism is one of our pedagogical practice structuring axis: the team dedicates a very important amount of coordination, thinking, new tools crafting time to create the learning conditions and situations in the three languages. The Agency for French Education Abroad noticed and underlined during their visits that this trilingual education ambition makes LIFT stand out amongst the other French lycées of the zone, and encouraged us to maintain our efforts in this educational value proposition.

I truly believe in humbleness, that allows repetition and thus improvement; at the level of the school, it really matters to us to remain a learning organization. Likewise, concerning the definition of our educative offer we communicate to the families, to you and to the parents we meet for upcoming year, we are convinced **it is essential to make sure we are transparent regarding what we can or cannot do** for the communities we serve, rather than display ambitions and terms, indeed catchy but that we might lose meaning of and disappoint.

This first year has been rich in teachings for ourselves as a school. First and foremost, I believe we can congratulate ourselves, and mostly congratulate the pupils. What a pleasure and a pride to be able to have simple conversations today with pupils that were discovering French on September! Huge progress also have been noted in English and Mandarin. The choice, let's even say the challenge, of a trilingual teaching, in the scope of a kind of teaching where the languages are closely linked in one school day, has already been met. However, along your side, we were able, especially thanks to real class teaching, to try the linguistic dimension of our pedagogical project. **It is time, in order to prepare this second schoolyear, to sharpen it and build a consensus around these topics.**

From the outset, as a French school, the essential part and the point on which we cannot compromise is French. **Deliver the french curriculum**, at least in primary school, is the heart of LIFT's pedagogical project. French is essential and predominant in our curriculum. The Agency for French Education Abroad regularly reminds us this obligation. **We already pushed to the maximum the english and mandarin teaching time, regarding what the accreditation frame allows us to.**

The English learning process seems relatively easy, and all pupils' parents largely agree on the need for their child to master this language as much as possible, which is rarely their mother tongue. By the way, we reinforce our english as a foreign language set-up for the second semester. It is the obvious component of the "international" dimension of the school, and, by capillarity action, of the "international" dimension our families want to give to their child's education.

The mandarin learning process, as essential as the English one, is something we think about, because it is in mandarin that we have the most heterogeneous levels at the entering of LIFT, but also where the families expectations vary the most.

On the one hand, **we absolutely insist on our will that the language of the country where we live has all its space within our school, and for all the pupils.** It is why we insist on trilinguism: in order to **build this linguistical and cultural bridge that enables our pupils to understand the country where they live**, no matter their personal history.

On the other hand, the school's demography implies that, and we are delighted, the majority of the families are Taiwanese or binational. It is a first rank stake for our school, to seize our pupils' identity construction. We are totally aware that for these families, it is hardly conceivable, in order to have an international school life, for their children to be deprived from their mother tongue. We discussed this matter with the children themselves during the representative council; their answers to "why are you studying mandarin?" reminded us how meaningful and urgent this effort is.



ÉDITO:

Setting the conditions of a total trilinguism comes up against two limitations linked with one another: **children cannot do everything, and in the context of an accredited school, we must meet precise criteria of amount of time dedicated to languages and languages that are not French.**

At the elementary school level, the choice is made without ambiguity: the accredited levels and offering, with two paths, maximum exposure to the three languages. If we are legally obliged, as an experimental educational Taiwanese institution, to create connections between LIFT and the educational system, thus make sure of the level equivalency, in the facts, going back to the Taiwanese school seems to be a very unlikely option for our families. On these levels, we welcome a public so diverse regarding linguistic backgrounds that this frame appears to be the best to progressively integrate all our pupils to the demanding conditions of a french school life, while leaving the door open to an eventual continuation of study in mandarin or english, according to the individual family pathways.

This matter becomes more urgent when entering middle school. **Is it possible to acquire at the same time french, english and mandarin at an equivalent level of the one in the french, english and Taiwanese systems? It seems important to us to say that the answer is no.** That if, also depending on the language(s) spoken at home, the parents' co-education effort and each pupils' predispositions can support a real bilinguism, a choice has to be done at some point.

To us, the matter, that essentially is the large amount of time necessary to learn Mandarin, wraps up around **whether you consider superior studies in mandarin or not.** If that is the case, providing the mandarin teaching needed during middle and high school seems hardly compatible with what demands the french curriculum and an english bilinguism consolidation.

It is important to know that if we collectively decide to tend towards **an accredited school up until the International French Baccalauréat**, the set-ups we dispose of, because offered by the Agency for French Education Abroad, like the "bilangue" classes and the international sections are relatively shy regarding the amount of language and subjects that can be taught in mandarin or english.

Thus, for next year's 6eme class, and after consultation with all the CM2 pupils' parents, we made the choice of a curriculum that is compatible with the accreditation, and that will include 4 weekly hours in English, 4 weekly hours of maths in English, and either 1 hour of mandarin / Taiwanese cultural elements for pupils who are not in an intensive mandarin learning process, either 3 hours of reinforced and optional mandarin learning, branch of excellence, for those who want to give mandarin an important part in their life.

The gradual construction of such a middle school, then high school, will enable our pupils to see their studies validated by the International French Baccalauréat, then thanks to their linguistic skills, to enter french and english speaking institutions of higher learning all over the world.

The topic of mastering mandarin in this pathway remains an important matter for the families; it essentially crystallizes on our ability to support a learning process that also happens on the time outside of school, and to **offer a clear assessment of the equivalency to the Taiwanese school**, your child reached. This latter obviously depends on the level of mandarin when the child enters LIFT, the co-education effort done by the family, and the chosen pathway. For instance, it seems obvious to us that Taiwanese families wish that their children can write correctly in Taiwanese, the specificity of this language implies that the ambition isn't always the same for a level that enables to follow a university course of study in Chinese.

We could imagine two pathways at LIFT, one accredited and delivering the baccalauréat, with english as a main subject, the other totally bilingual french/mandarin and offering for instance IB. But we are still far from being able to aim for these ambitions, and need to clarify a frame for our growth.

This debate already happened at school, be it during our discussions during pupils' access and exit of the school, between parents, during individual encounters with Kuo-Ying Chiang-Woets, or in a more formal way, during our first school council. This question has been brought up during last LIFT's administration committee, and will be a debate during our next school council.

Whatever the communication and representation channel is, it matters that all of you as parents are listened to and considered in the multiplicity of your situations. One of the big challenges of a school where parental governance has such a role remains **the duty, after listening to one another, of the synthesis effort, of consensus and of concord.** The balanced choices are not always possible on all the topics. On this one, precisely, we think it is necessary to make a decision, whatever your conclusion is for more clarity, and thus a more efficient implementation. Please do not hesitate to seize the matter and to share with us your points of view.

