

## Nature of the subject

### Language acquisition

Language acquisition consists of two modern language courses—language ab initio and language B—that are offered in a number of languages, and a classical languages course that is offered in Latin and Classical Greek. Owing to the nature of language study in the latter, there are specific aims for classical literature that can be found in the *Classical languages guide*. Language ab initio and language B are language acquisition courses designed to provide students with the necessary skills and intercultural understanding to enable them to communicate successfully in an environment where the language studied is spoken. This process allows the learner to go beyond the confines of the classroom, expanding their awareness of the world and fostering respect for cultural diversity.

The two modern language courses—language ab initio and language B—develop students' linguistic abilities through the development of receptive, productive and interactive skills (as defined in the "Syllabus content" section). The classical languages course focuses on the study of the language, literature and culture of the classical world.

### Language B SL and language B HL

Language B is a language acquisition course designed for students with some previous experience of the target language. In the language B course, students further develop their ability to communicate in the target language through the study of language, themes and texts. In doing so, they also develop conceptual understandings of how language works, as appropriate to the level of the course.

Most language B subjects are available at both SL and HL. A list of languages offered at language B SL and HL is released each year in the Diploma Programme *Assessment procedures*.

### Distinction between SL and HL

At both levels of language B (SL and HL), students learn to communicate in the target language in familiar and unfamiliar contexts. They describe situations, narrate events, make comparisons, explain problems, and state and support their personal opinions on a variety of topics relating to course content. The study of two literary works originally written in the target language is required only at language B HL. The distinction between language B SL and HL can also be seen in the level of competency the student is expected to develop in the receptive, productive and interactive skills described below.

#### Language B SL

**Receptive skills:** Students understand a range of written and spoken authentic personal, professional and mass media texts on topics of interest. They understand descriptions of events, feelings and wishes; they understand comparisons and recognize a straightforward, linear argument. They use context to deduce the meaning of sentences and unknown words and phrases.

**Productive skills:** Students write texts for a variety of purposes and make oral presentations on topics of interest. They write descriptive texts and personal correspondence; they make comparisons, narrate stories, provide detailed accounts, and express their thoughts and opinions on abstract or cultural topics.

**Interactive skills:** Students initiate and maintain the flow of conversations and discussions. They express and respond to opinions and feelings on a variety of topics. They use and understand clear speech on a variety of topics relating to course content and the culture(s) of the target language. Students use a variety of strategies to negotiate meaning and foster communication.

## Language B HL

At HL, students are expected to extend the range and complexity of the language they use and understand in order to communicate. They continue to develop their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, as well as their conceptual understanding of how language works, in order to construct, analyse and evaluate arguments on a variety of topics relating to course content and the target language culture(s).

**Receptive skills:** Students understand and evaluate a wide variety of written and spoken authentic personal, professional and mass media texts; they understand fundamental elements of literary texts such as theme, plot and character. They analyse arguments, distinguishing main points from relevant supporting details and explanations. They use a variety of strategies to deduce meaning.

**Productive skills:** Students present and develop their ideas and opinions on a variety of topics, both orally and in writing. They construct and support arguments with explanations and examples. They speak and write at length, and with purpose, in order to meet a wide range of communicative needs: describing, narrating, comparing, explaining, persuading, justifying, evaluating.

**Interactive skills:** Students initiate, maintain and close oral exchanges, displaying some ability to make adjustments in style or emphasis. They use a variety of strategies to maintain the flow of conversations and discussions on a variety of topics relating to course content and the culture(s) of the target language. Students are adept in negotiating meaning and fostering communication.

## Language B and the core

Teachers of language acquisition courses need to plan carefully to provide opportunities for students to draw on their experiences in the core. Examples of how this might happen include:

- transferring the critical-thinking process explored in TOK to the development of well-supported arguments in written text types, such as a speech or report
- using personal knowledge gained from a CAS experience as a cultural comparison in an individual or group oral activity, or as an example in a written response
- developing ideas for CAS activities as a result of themes and topics explored in a language acquisition class
- developing a research question for an EE that allows the deeper exploration of a language topic of special interest to the student
- using the opportunity to write an EE in the student's language of study as a means of personal challenge and skills development.

The following section outlines the nature of the contributions that each element of the core can make to language acquisition lessons.

## Language B and theory of knowledge

Theory of knowledge (TOK) is one of the three core elements of the Diploma Programme (DP). It plays a special role in the programme by providing an opportunity for students to reflect on the fundamental question of how they know what they know. It aims to help students become more aware of their own perspective, as well as developing an awareness of multiple perspectives. More information on TOK can be found in the *Theory of knowledge guide*.

Language is itself one of the specific ways of knowing that is identified in the TOK course. In addition to this explicit exploration of language, the skills and wider conceptual understandings that students develop in TOK can make an extremely positive contribution to their study of language acquisition. TOK develops higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis and evaluation, and also helps students to make connections and comparisons across their subject areas and the DP core. In this way, language acquisition both supports and is supported by TOK.

As well as using the skills developed in TOK in acquiring an additional language, students will also benefit from guiding questions that can connect TOK to the five themes of the language B curriculum. The following discussion questions are examples and are not meant to be either prescriptive or exhaustive.

- Is it possible to think without language?
- What would be lost if the whole world shared one common language?
- If people speak more than one language, is what they know different in each language?
- Do you think maths, logic or music should be classified as languages?
- In what ways can language be used to influence, persuade or manipulate people?
- Does language describe our experience of the world, or does it actively shape our experience of the world?
- How are metaphors used in the construction of knowledge?
- To what extent is our perspective determined by our membership of a particular culture?
- To what extent are we aware of the impact of culture on what we believe or know?
- Is there anything that is true for all cultures?

## Language B and creativity, activity, service

Creativity, activity, service (CAS) experiences can be associated with each of the subject groups of the DP.

CAS and language acquisition can complement each other in a variety of ways. Students can enhance intercultural understanding through the active and purposeful use of their acquired language within the specific real-life contexts provided by their CAS experiences. Students may also draw on their CAS experiences to enrich their involvement in language acquisition both within and outside the classroom.

An important characteristic of the language acquisition courses is the conceptual understandings that students develop. Through the five prescribed themes around which the language acquisition courses are centred, students might be able to investigate, plan, act and reflect on CAS experiences and projects in a more informed and meaningful way. Similarly, CAS experiences can ignite students' passion for addressing particular personal, local, national and global issues.

Language acquisition teachers can assist students in making links between their subjects and their CAS experiences, where appropriate. This will provide students with relevance in both their subject learning and their CAS learning through purposeful discussion and real experiences.

The challenge and enjoyment of CAS can often have a profound effect on language acquisition students, who might choose, for example, to engage with CAS in the following ways.

- As a CAS experience, a student can extend engagement with the language acquisition theme of “sharing the planet” (for example, environment) by conducting a separate activity in learning the names of organic and human-made materials in the target language. The student could then walk around the school to collect human-made waste (for example, plastic) that is discarded during one day, and then display it.
- In a series of CAS experiences relating to the language acquisition theme of “social organization” (for example, social relationships, community, social engagement), a student interacts with elderly target language speakers, over a number of visits, to collect sayings, idioms or adages used by the older generations. These could then be shared in an article on the school or programme blog.
- Students can develop a CAS project linked to the language acquisition theme of “experiences” (for example, migration) in which they engage with members of a local refugee population. The students could collaborate in an investigation of how migrants balance negotiating a new culture with maintaining their cultural heritage. An outcome of this interaction could be the creation of a mural representing the cultural balance.

It is important to note that a CAS experience can be a single event or may be an extended series of events. However, CAS experiences must be distinct from, and may not be included or used in, the student’s diploma course requirements.

Additional suggestions on the links between DP subjects and CAS can be found in the *Creativity, activity, service teacher support material*.

## Language B and the extended essay

Writing an extended essay (EE) in a language of acquisition provides students with an excellent opportunity to explore one aspect of their chosen language in greater depth and to increase their intercultural understanding and international-mindedness. In line with the IB’s focus on approaches to teaching and learning (ATL), the EE in a language of acquisition provides opportunities for students to develop their thinking, research and self-management skills while, at the same time, focusing on an aspect of language that is of particular personal interest and challenge.

Students must select one of the three distinct categories outlined below in order to develop a manageable research question for their EE. A simplified summary, with examples, is provided in the table below. For full details of requirements, teachers and students must refer to the *Extended essay guide* (first assessment 2018).

- Category 1 (“language”) offers the opportunity to engage with a particular linguistic aspect in greater detail.
- Category 2 (“culture and society”) allows the student to focus on one aspect of the target culture, linked to either a linguistic detail or a cultural artifact, and complements perfectly the learner profile for language acquisition, promoting reflection on the culture of the target language and the learner’s role in the linguistic community.
- Category 3 (“literature”) provides an opportunity for students to explore one or more works of literature in order to widen their understanding of the target language and culture from a literary angle.

Category	Nature	Description	Example
1	Language	A specific analysis of language, its use, structure, development, and so on. It is normally related to its cultural context or a specific text.	“ <i>Le parler jeune</i> ”: An analysis of the vocabulary and expressions common in the language of youth in France today.
2A	Culture and society	A socio-cultural analysis of the impact of a particular issue on the form or use of the language based on an examination of language use.	An analysis of the way in which the advent of internet marketing in China has had an impact on the language.

Category	Nature	Description	Example
2B	Culture and society	A sociocultural analysis of the impact of a particular issue on the form or use of the language in an essay of a general cultural nature based on specific cultural artifacts.	To what extent do the films <i>Entre les murs</i> and <i>La journée de la jupe</i> portray an accurate image of the French education system?
3	Literature	An analysis of a literary type, based on a specific work or works of literature. All works must originally have been written in the target language.	How effective is the use of the first person narrator in the German novel <i>Crazy</i> by Benjamin Lebert?

## Language acquisition and international-mindedness

International-mindedness is central to the IB philosophy and instrumental in aspiring to a more peaceful world. Language acquisition courses do not have as their only goal the development of language skills, but also fostering intercultural understanding and global engagement. The nature of the language acquisition process supports international-mindedness and is, in turn, supported by it. The flexibility of IB course design allows language acquisition teachers to incorporate ideas and resources that encourage students to view aspects of the language and culture from different (and sometimes differing) perspectives, to make non-judgmental comparisons of language and culture, and to view language and culture in a global context.

International-mindedness also provides opportunities for students to progress in the development of IB learner profile traits. Through exposure to, examination of, and reflection on, texts from cultures other than their own, students nurture their curiosity (*inquirers*), engage with issues and ideas of global significance (*knowledgeable*), use critical-thinking skills (*thinkers*) and listen carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups (*communicators*). They learn to show respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere (*principled*), critically appreciate the values and traditions of others (*open-minded*), show empathy, compassion and respect (*caring*), recognize their interdependence with other people and the world in which they live (*balanced*), consider the world thoughtfully (*reflective*) and explore new ideas (*risk-takers*).

## Engaging with sensitive topics

All language acquisition courses will provide the opportunity to engage with a broad range of texts, stimuli and scenarios that address topics of personal, local or national and global significance. Such work may well raise issues that challenge learners intellectually, personally and culturally. Engagement with these topics, whether intentional or incidental, can be opportunities for development of IB learner profile traits. Teachers should help learners to approach such materials in a sensitive, responsible and reflective manner, bearing in mind the IB's mission and its commitment to international-mindedness and intercultural respect within the context of the course. Consideration should also be given to the personal and social values of others. As part of the collective consideration of the school, language acquisition students must be supported in maintaining an ethical perspective during their course. Schools must make every reasonable effort to encourage students to respond appropriately (without seeking to offend), to promote respect for their peers and to consider the environment in all their actions.



In selecting texts and preparing materials and tasks for language acquisition courses, teachers are reminded to consider the cultural environment and the make-up of the student body, in order to act as role models in demonstrating an awareness of, and sensitivity to, deeply held personal and community values.

## Prior learning

Students enter language acquisition courses with varying degrees of exposure to the target language(s). It is, therefore, important that students are placed into a course that is most suited to their language development needs and that will provide them with an appropriate academic challenge. For those students entering DP language acquisition from the Middle Years Programme (MYP), table 1 in the “Language acquisition across the IB continuum” section of the MYP *Language acquisition guide* provides indications that can be useful for appropriate placement.

Further placement guidance can be drawn from the study *Benchmarking Selected IB Diploma Programme Language Courses to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. This study suggests that students already at CEFR A2 or B1 in the target language can comfortably take language B SL. Students already at CEFR B1 or B2 can comfortably take language B HL.

## Links to the Middle Years Programme

The MYP is designed for students aged 11 to 16 and, as an integral part of the IB continuum, can directly lead into the DP. MYP language acquisition provides students with opportunities that prepare them for a DP language acquisition course through the following shared aims.

- Developing communication skills in an additional language
- Developing insights into the features, processes and craft of language, and the concept of culture, encouraging students to see that there are diverse ways of living, behaving and viewing the world
- Developing intercultural understanding and global engagement, leading to international-mindedness
- Providing opportunities for learning through inquiry and the development of critical- and creative-thinking skills
- Fostering curiosity and a desire for lifelong learning
- Understanding and respecting other languages and cultures

As with the DP, the MYP holistically addresses students’ intellectual, social, emotional and physical well-being, and provides students with opportunities to develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills they need in order to manage complex ideas and issues, and take responsible action for the future. The MYP requires the study of at least two languages to support students in understanding their own cultures and those of others. Additionally, the MYP helps to prepare students for further education, the workplace and lifelong learning. These courses also provide the opportunity to develop language skills and learn **about** language through the conceptual understandings of **communication, connections, creativity** and **culture**. The range of conceptual understandings, and factual and procedural knowledge that language acquisition students encounter throughout the MYP, can be directly transferred and developed in DP language acquisition courses, as can related concepts such as **audience, purpose, meaning** and **context**.

Learning takes place within contexts relevant to the student, whether personal, local, national, international or globally significant. This approach—using a range of learning contexts in the MYP—is directly extended through the five prescribed themes of DP language acquisition courses: identities; experiences; human ingenuity; social organization; sharing the planet.

## Links to the IB Career-related Programme

The IB Career-related Programme (CP) is a framework of international education that incorporates the vision and educational principles of the IB into a unique programme specifically developed for students who wish to engage in career-related learning. The CP's flexible educational framework allows schools to meet the needs, backgrounds and contexts of students, and is especially relevant for language acquisition.

The core of the CP enables students to enhance their personal and interpersonal development, with an emphasis on experiential learning. One of the components of the CP core is language development, which ensures that all CP students have access, and are exposed, to an additional language that will enable them to use the language they have studied, encourage intercultural awareness and gain personal fulfilment. Students are encouraged to begin or extend the study of an additional language that suits their needs, background and context. A minimum of 50 hours is expected to be devoted to language development. CP students must complete a language development portfolio to the satisfaction of the school.

One of the ways in which students can undertake language development in the CP is with an extension to their DP language acquisition course. This could be done through a school-designed language development course, through an external provider of language development or through monitored self-directed study. It is essential that the content of the provision of language development is an extension to the DP language acquisition coursework, if both are based on the same target language. The content and outcomes of the extension course may be tailored to the career-related studies of the students, if so desired.

The CP documents *Language development guide*, *General regulations: Career-related Programme*, and *Language development teacher support material* provide further guidance regarding language acquisition and language development. More information about the CP can be found on the CP website, which can be accessed through the programme resource centre.

# Aims

## Language acquisition aims

The following aims are common to both language B and language ab initio.

1. Develop international-mindedness through the study of languages, cultures, and ideas and issues of global significance.
2. Enable students to communicate in the language they have studied in a range of contexts and for a variety of purposes.
3. Encourage, through the study of texts and through social interaction, an awareness and appreciation of a variety of perspectives of people from diverse cultures.
4. Develop students' understanding of the relationship between the languages and cultures with which they are familiar.
5. Develop students' awareness of the importance of language in relation to other areas of knowledge.
6. Provide students, through language learning and the process of inquiry, with opportunities for intellectual engagement and the development of critical- and creative-thinking skills.
7. Provide students with a basis for further study, work and leisure through the use of an additional language.
8. Foster curiosity, creativity and a lifelong enjoyment of language learning.