Syllabus content

Language

All the languages B offered are different in nature, and the exact range of language structures that should be taught differs between languages. These structures will depend on the language B taught, the circumstances in which the course is taught, and the students' needs. Teachers should identify the appropriate range of vocabulary, idiomatic expressions and language structures that should be included in their teaching.

As far as possible, the teaching of language structures should take place in the context of other activities, for example, oral activities or the reading of texts. However, when this approach is neither possible nor appropriate, the systematic and formal teaching of these structures could be considered. Teachers should aim to provide a typical monolingual environment where teaching is provided in the target language and learning is placed in contexts that would be familiar to speakers of that language.

Topics

The course comprises five topics: three from the core and two chosen from the five options.

At least two aspects must be covered in each of the five topics that make up the course.

Additionally, at HL students must read two works of literature.

For example, a course could be structured as follows.

Topic	Aspects covered	
Communication and media	Advertising	Bias in media
Global issues	Global warming	Migration
Social relationships	Language and identity	Social structures
Health	Diet and nutrition	Drug abuse
Science and technology	Ethics and science	Impact of IT on society

The core and the options at both levels, as well as literature at HL, must be studied within the context of the culture(s) of the target language. The order in which the components of both the core and the options are presented in this guide is not an indication of the sequence in which they should be taught.

In addition, the suggested aspects for the core and the options do not have defined delimitations—they may be interrelated and may be perceived from more than one topic's perspective. The aspects listed are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. For example, one can approach "drug abuse" from a number of angles such as the effect of drug addiction on the addict's relationship with family members, the way in which reality TV shows address drug addiction, the funding of initiatives to raise awareness, the effect of drug abuse on one's health, athletes on performance drugs, and the use of scientific research to combat drug addiction.

Core

There are three topics in the core.

- Communication and media

- Global issues

- Social relationships

These three topics are compulsory at SL and HL. Students are required to study at least two aspects from each core topic.

Communication and media

How people interact, transmit and gather data for the purposes of information and entertainment.

Possible aspects to cover:

- advertising

- bias in media

- censorship

- internet

- mail

- press

- radio and television

- sensationalism in media

- telephone.

Global issues

Current matters and future scenarios that have an impact at a regional, national and/or international level, bearing in mind that they need to be addressed from the perspective of the target language's culture(s).

Possible aspects to cover:

- drugs

- energy reserves

- food and water

- global warming, climate change, natural disasters

- globalization

- international economy

- migration (rural–urban, or international)

- poverty and famine

- racism, prejudice, discrimination

- the effect of man on nature

- the environment and sustainability.

Social relationships

How people interrelate and behave—as members of a community, individually and in groups.

Possible aspects to cover:

- celebrations, social and religious events

- educational system

- language and cultural identity, or self-identity

- linguistic dominance

- minorities

- multilingualism

- nationalism, patriotism, fanaticism

- relationships (friendship, work, family)

- social and/or political structures

- social behaviours and stances

- taboos versus what is socially acceptable.

Options

There are five topics in the options.

- Cultural diversity

- Customs and traditions

- Health

- Leisure

- Science and technology

Teachers select two topics. At least two aspects must be studied from each selection.

Cultural diversity

The ethnic, gender, racial, ideological and socio-economic varieties within a community of the target language.

Possible aspects to cover:

- beliefs, values and norms

- culinary heritage

- how culture is learned

- intercultural assimilation

- interlinguistic influence

- language diversity

- migration

- population diversity

- subcultures

- the concepts of human beauty

- verbal and non-verbal communication.

Customs and traditions

The current and past practices, representations, expressions and knowledge that belong to a community of the target language.

Possible aspects to cover:

- celebrations, social and religious events

- dress codes, uniforms

- etiquette and protocols

- fashion

- food

- historical events

- national costumes

- the arts.

Health

Physical, mental and social well-being, as well as matters related to illnesses.

Possible aspects to cover:

- concepts of beauty and health

- diet and nutrition

- drug abuse

- epidemics

- health services

- hygiene

- illnesses, symptoms of good/ill health

- mental health

- physical exercise

- surgery

- traditional and alternative medicine.

Leisure

The variety of activities performed for enjoyment.

Possible aspects to cover:

- entertainment

- exhibitions and shows

- games

- hobbies

- recreation

- social interaction through leisure

- sports

- travelling.

Science and technology

The relationship between science and technology, and their impact on a community of the target language.

Possible aspects to cover:

- entertainment

- ethics and science

- ethics and technology

- impact of information technology on society

- natural sciences

- renewable energy

- scientific research

- social sciences.

Literature (HL only)

Reading literature in the target language can be an enjoyable journey into the culture(s) studied. It will help students to broaden their vocabulary and to use language in a more creative manner, developing fluent reading skills, promoting interpretative and inferential skills, and contributing to intercultural understanding. Students should understand the works in some depth (see "Assessment objectives" number 6), but literary criticism as such is not an objective of the language B course at HL.

Students are required to read two works of literature originally written in the target language. These works may be from any genre, or may both be of the same genre. They do not need to be linked in any way (by author, theme, period).

When selecting the works, teachers should keep in mind that students are in the process of acquiring an additional language. Works written with a high complexity of language may not be suitable material.

Receptive, productive and interactive skills

Language acquisition will be achieved through the development of the receptive, productive and interactive skills and competencies that can be accomplished through a variety of activities in oral and/or written forms.

These skills have been defined as follows by the Council of Europe (2001).

"**Receptive** activities include silent reading and following the media. They are also of importance in many forms of learning (understanding course content, consulting textbooks, works of reference and documents).

Productive activities have an important function in many academic and professional fields (oral presentations, written studies and reports) and particular social value is attached to them (judgments made of what has been submitted in writing

or of fluency in speaking and delivering oral presentations).

In **interaction** at least two individuals participate in an oral and/or written exchange in which production and reception alternate and may in fact overlap in oral communication. Not only may two interlocutors be speaking and yet listening to each other simultaneously. Even where turn-taking is strictly respected, the listener is generally already forecasting the remainder of the speaker's message and preparing a response. Learning to interact thus involves more than learning to receive and to produce utterances. High importance is generally attributed to interaction in language use and learning in view of its central role in communication."

Principles of course design

A student learning a language in an IB programme should not be merely absorbing grammatical or linguistic rules. Teachers should consider the student as a person interacting with a social environment. A student learns about a culture when studying its language. Accordingly, the language B course should give as much attention to the sociocultural components of a language as to the teaching of communicative skills and linguistic components.

Intercultural dimension

Plurilingualism and intercultural understanding are major goals in language teaching and learning. These contribute to the development of positive attitudes and respect between peoples and cultures, which are integral to the IB philosophy.

When teaching certain aspects of a culture in an explicit manner, a teacher should be aware that certain topics and stereotypes might give the wrong idea of the target culture(s). It is better that cultural prototypes be identified, rather than stereotypes, always keeping in mind that prototypes are neither permanent nor unchangeable. Classroom activities that dismantle cultural stereotypes can be effective in negating the simplistic and misleading concepts that have often been absorbed without any analysis.

How are we exposed to culture?

- Through symbols

- Through beliefs and superstitions

- Through the ways in which reality is classified and ordered

- Through behaviours

- Through assumptions, linked to beliefs and behaviours

Symbols, beliefs and assumptions are common to, and understood by, members of a cultural community, and are conveyed implicitly. These symbols, beliefs and assumptions may be apparent in a different cultural community, although they are likely to have other meanings. The lack of knowledge of these differences is likely to lead to cultural misinterpretations—for example, while white is the colour of mourning in some cultures, black or different colours are used in others.

How do we break stereotypes?

Ethnocentric approaches when teaching the target culture(s) should be avoided, as these might lead the student to have negative feelings towards the target culture(s).

In classroom activities in which the student's culture(s) and the target culture(s) are analysed together, the student will be able to develop an intercultural engagement, which will encourage a realization that both cultures might be similar or different in some aspects. Developing this awareness of differences and similarities should promote attitudes of tolerance, understanding and respect, thus reflecting the IB learner profile. At the same time, this process should help students to develop a keener sense of their own cultural identity.

Variety

Teachers should ensure that:

- students are introduced to a full range of text types appropriate to their level

- students practise the language through a range of classroom activities, as well as through a range of individual tasks

- students are given a balanced allocation of time for tasks and activities relating to the options and core topics

- students are provided with a mixture of activities in order to address and develop all the receptive, productive and interactive skills.

Integration

Teachers should ensure that their students:

- move easily from one language skill to another (for example, a discussion after reading some news)

- consider and explore links with other areas of knowledge (including the other subject areas in the IB Diploma Programme)

- are given a broad choice of ways in which to demonstrate learning

- are involved in the selection of material to be studied

- learn language in context

- use authentic materials.

The following are possible ways of integrating various aspects of teaching language acquisition.

Class-based activities

Most class-based activities should integrate a number of aspects of the syllabus. Examples could include:

- in small groups, collectively working out the answers to a number of questions on a text that students have read (or listened to) and then reporting back to the class

- working on a project that would require:

  - reading and listening in order to gather information

  - designing a questionnaire

  - interviewing native speakers of the language

- reporting back to the class

- writing documents, guides or letters in response to the information.

Out-of-class activities

Wherever possible, students should be encouraged to practise the language with speakers of the target language, for example, through correspondence, use of email, language clubs.

In addition to encouraging the students' personal development, use of the internet can help them develop their receptive skills as well as their awareness of the culture(s) of the target language. They can be encouraged to search for information, compare various sites on a given topic, summarize the results, present them to the class and write a response by email.

Technology in the language class

Information technology (IT) allows teachers and students access to authentic, up-to-date material and facilitates interaction between school communities and other networks in the target language. In this way, the language of study is used both inside and outside the classroom and is at the centre of the student's learning experience. IT can support custom-made language courses that are tailored to students' individual learning styles.