International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme Subject Brief

Language acquisition:

Language ab initio – Standard level

First assessments 2013 – Last assessments 2019

The IB Diploma Programme (DP) is a rigorous, academically challenging and balanced programme of education designed to prepare students aged 16 to 19 for success at university and life beyond. The DP aims to encourage students to be knowledgeable, inquiring, caring and compassionate, and to develop intercultural understanding, open-mindedness and the attitudes necessary to respect and evaluate a range of viewpoints.

To ensure both breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding, students must choose at least one subject from five groups: 1) their best language, 2) additional language(s), 3) social sciences, 4) experimental sciences, and 5) mathematics. Students may choose either an arts subject from group 6, or a second subject from groups 1 to 5. At least three and not more than four subjects are taken at higher level (240 recommended teaching hours), while the remaining are taken at standard level (150 recommended teaching hours). In addition, three core elements—the extended essay, theory of knowledge and creativity, action, service—are compulsory and central to the philosophy of the programme.

These IB DP subject briefs illustrate four key course components.

I. Course description and aims
II. Curriculum model overview
III. Assessment model
IV. Sample questions

I. Course description and aims

The IB DP language ab initio course is 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 encourages the learner to go beyond the confines of the classroom, expanding an awareness of the world and fostering respect for cultural diversity. The language ab initio course develops students' linguistic abilities through the development of receptive, productive and interactive skills by providing them opportunities to respond and interact appropriately in a defined range of everyday situations. Language ab initio is available at standard level only.

The aims of the language ab initio course are to:

- develop students' intercultural understanding
- enable students to understand and use the language they have studied in a range of contexts and for a variety of purposes
- encourage, through the study of texts and through social interaction, an awareness and appreciation of the different perspectives of people from other cultures
- develop students' awareness of the role of language in relation to other areas of knowledge
- develop students' awareness of the relationship between the languages and cultures with which they are familiar
- provide students with a basis for further study, work and leisure through the use of an additional language
- provide the opportunity for enjoyment, creativity and intellectual stimulation through knowledge of an additional language.

II. Curriculum model overview

Three areas of study – language, themes and texts – provide the basis of the language ab initio course. These three fundamental areas, as well as intercultural understanding, are all interrelated and should be studied concurrently.

Areas of Study
Language • Receptive skills: the ability to comprehend straightforward written and spoken language. • Productive skills: the ability to write and speak the target • language effectively. • Interactive skills: the ability to understand and respond effectively to written and spoken language.
Themes • Individuals and society – Daily routines; education; food and drink; personal details; appearance and character physical health; relationships; shopping • Leisure and work – Employment; entertainment; holidays; media; sport; technology; transport • Urban and rural environment – Environmental concerns; global issues; neighbourhood; physical geography; town and services; weather
Texts During the course, students are taught to understand and produce a variety of spoken, written and visual texts. Use of authentic texts is encouraged. Examples of texts to be studied include articles, letters, maps, timetables and web pages.

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III. Assessment model

Having followed the language ab initio standard level course, students will be assessed on their ability to:

- demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the intercultural elements related to the prescribed topics
- communicate clearly and effectively in a range of situations
- understand and use accurately the basic structures of the language
- understand and use an appropriate range of vocabulary
- use a register and a format that are appropriate to the situation.

Assessment at a glance

Type of assessment	Format of assessment	Time (hours)	Weighting of final grade (%)
External			75
Paper 1: Receptive skills	Understanding of four written texts. Text-handling exercises.	1.5	30
Paper 2: Productive skills	Two compulsory writing exercises. Section A: One question to be answered from a choice of two. Section B: One question to be answered from a choice of three.	1	25
Written assignment: Receptive and productive skills	A piece of writing, 200–300 words, in the target language carried out under teacher guidance.	2	20
Internal			25
Individual oral: Interactive skills	1. Presentation of a visual stimulus (from a choice of two) by the student 2. Follow-up questions on the visual stimulus 3. General conversation including at least two questions on the written assignment	10 minutes	25

IV. Sample questions

- Your teacher has asked you to speak about the disadvantages of using public transport. Write the text of your speech. Mention at least three disadvantages.
- You are on holiday in a (target language) speaking country. On your personal blog you post a message about someone you have just met. In your blog entry you explain:
    - three details about this person
    - where you met
    - what you have been doing together
    - what your future plans are

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