

The Language Acquisition in International Baccalaureate: A Systematic Literature Review of Potentials and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The trend in deep learning in English language education has encouraged greater attention toward curriculum models that connect language learning with meaningful classroom interaction. Within this research, the International Baccalaureate (IB) Language Acquisition framework has gained attention for its learner-centred and inquiry-oriented approach to language education. This study aims to examine the potentials and challenges of IB Language Acquisition in improving English language learning. Using a systematic literature review design guided by PRISMA, the study selected ten peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2025 from Scopus, ERIC, SAGE Journals, Google Scholar, and Semantic Scholar. Our findings show that IB Language Acquisition engage deeper learning by emphasising language as part of meaning-making, identity construction, inquiry, conceptual engagement, critical thinking, and multilingual interaction. The findings also indicate a shift from form-focused language learning toward sociocultural and epistemic perspectives where language functions as a medium for constructing understanding and participating in learning processes. However, the implementation of IB Language Acquisition remains shaped by contextual challenges, including procedural inquiry practices, unequal institutional readiness, assessment demands, and tensions surrounding multilingualism and academic English expectations.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Indonesian government has increasingly prioritised the integration of deep learning into its national curriculum (Wilson & Defianty, 2024). Ideally, English instruction should also go into deep learning that prepares students for real communication (Alamri, 2025; Illés & Akcan, 2017). Even though recent national policies promote the integration of deep learning, many teachers continue to struggle with applying it effectively in English classrooms. These challenges often stem from the readiness and capacity of the teacher to implement the approach effectively (Zainudin et al., 2019), students' low engagement in higher-order thinking, as well as their insufficient foundational English knowledge, like grammar and vocabulary (Ginting & Kuswandono, 2020), and time limitation, which hinders successful learning outcomes (Pravita & Kuswandono, 2021).

One potential way to address these challenges is by drawing lessons from educational frameworks that have successfully embedded deep learning in language instruction. The International Baccalaureate curriculum has long incorporated deep learning principles in second language learning through its Language Acquisition subject (IBO, 2020). The value and the nature of deep learning outlined in government curriculum guidelines align closely with the International Baccalaureate's learning outcomes (Kinoshita & Datta, 2021), which makes those compatible and relevant role models for inspiring effective language learning practices.

The link between deep learning and International Baccalaureate Language Acquisition can be described through four connections. First, deep learning emphasises language as meaning-making, which aligns with the International Baccalaureate's view of language as a tool for building understanding (Boldt & Mortensen, 2024). Second, critical thinking as a core deep learning skill is also one of the targeted skills in students' profiles of the International Baccalaureate curriculum (Fullan et al., 2018). Third, deep learning encourages interdisciplinary learning, which matches the International Baccalaureate's framework to interconnect knowledge across disciplines (Dai et al., 2020). Fourth, deep learning is based on the notion that learning must reach the conceptual understanding in which is similar to the concept-based learning embedded in the International Baccalaureate's approach to teaching (Fullan et al., 2018). These four connections demonstrate that International Baccalaureate Language Acquisition naturally reflects the core concepts of deep learning. This alignment between language learning and deep learning objectives provides a practical model that can inform improvements in Indonesia's English language teaching as deep learning becomes a growing national priority.

However, while there appears to be growing interest in Language Acquisition under the International Baccalaureate curriculum, relevant studies appear insufficient and disjointed. The existing body of literature continues to focus primarily on localised teaching experiences, teacher perspectives, or isolated case-study analyses, without examining broader empirical research conducted across various IB schools over a specific period. More recent researches also highlights the existing gaps between the ideal teaching philosophy proposed by the International Baccalaureate and its reality in classrooms. According to Zeng (2024) for example, the realisation of IB curriculum principles is influenced considerably by institutional context, individual understanding of teachers, and local educational requirements. Similarly, the research by Clark and Terrett (2025) reveals the impact of various external factors on the implementation of IB language instruction, including curriculum integration, testing requirements, and institutional reform. In this sense, while IB Language Acquisition seeks to enhance linguistic, cognitive, and intercultural competencies of students through inquiry-based and holistic learning activities, the process is contingent on a number of internal and external variables, such as teachers' readiness and institutional support.

Therefore, a more comprehensive investigation is necessary to help fill the existing gap between the teaching ideals and existing classroom settings. In taking up this effort, the current study takes up the task of examining the possibilities and difficulties associated with the implementation of Language Acquisition within the context of International Baccalaureate English learning. implementing an approach such as the International Baccalaureate faces possible difficulties within the context of capacities and differences in the level of possible utility within the settings of teacher and institutional capacities within the national context. This study uses a systematic literature review (SLR) to gather empirical results from various research settings to

understand how teachers implement and experience International Baccalaureate-based language learning principles. It examines and discusses patterns in classroom practices to provide a detailed insight into instructional realities within the International Baccalaureate framework. It aims to highlight the potentials and challenges that can guide Indonesia's efforts to enhance deep learning in English language education.

This study is a part of the continuous study on theoretical insights of language acquisition and its framework in the International Baccalaureate curriculum. Research by Maryono & Emilia (2022) analysed the ideology, model, and structural elements of the IB Language Acquisition curriculum through a content analysis approach. The study revealed that the curriculum adopts a learner-centred ideology supported by collaborative learning to develop students' communicative competence. The analysis also indicated that the International Baccalaureate English curriculum integrates objectives, content, learning activities, and various types of assessment in a coherent structure aimed at constructing students' holistic development. Moreover, it emphasises conceptual understanding, reflective thinking, and communication as core learning outcomes, positing English as not merely a subject of study, but also as a medium for intercultural interaction and intellectual growth. These findings have contributed to a better theoretical understanding of how the International Baccalaureate curriculum is designed to promote deep learning in language education. Therefore, this article proposes two research questions to guide the analysis: (1) What potentials does the International Baccalaureate Language Acquisition framework offer for strengthening deep learning in English language classrooms? and (2) What challenges emerge in implementing International Baccalaureate-based Language Acquisition practices across diverse instructional contexts?

Language acquisition has significantly evolved in how it is understood within applied linguistics and language teaching. During the behaviourist era, it was mainly viewed as internalising habits through stimulus-response mechanisms and reinforcement from exposure and practice (Masood et al., 2022). This perspective was later challenged by Chomsky's generative theory, which viewed language acquisition as an internal cognitive process driven by an innate capacity for grammar (Kupisch et al., 2021). The discipline further evolved with Selinker's interlanguage theory and Krashen's input hypothesis, which make the exposure and comprehensible input as essential for learning. Later, theories such as Long's interaction hypothesis and Swain's output hypothesis added social and communicative aspects that emphasize meaningful interaction and language production that are important for achieving linguistic competence (Aljumah, 2020).

Within the International Baccalaureate framework, Language Acquisition is positioned as a holistic inquiry-driven second language learning that develops International Baccalaureate student's profile as communicator, thinker, and inquirer (IBO, 2013). In the IB framework, language learning centers on engaging learners as active meaning-makers who question, create, and reflect, rather than focusing solely on grammar or vocabulary. For example, McKeown & Ramadori (2022) in their ethnographic study of an International Baccalaureate high-school found that students developed what they termed a "language-learner identity" as they moved through inquiry-based tasks that blended language use with disciplinary thinking and cross-cultural reflection. Similarly, Maryono (2022) analysed the International Baccalaureate English Language Acquisition curriculum in Indonesia and revealed that the curriculum is built around a learner-centred ideology, collaborative learning and structured alignment of objectives, content, activities and assessments. These studies show that what makes LA in International Baccalaureate unique is not only the what

of language (forms and functions) but the how and the why tasks are designed to integrate (IBO, 2020) real-world relevance.

In the past decade, the topic of Language Acquisition under the International Baccalaureate framework appears to have received attention. A rather obvious trajectory could be identified from research on the grammatical competence level to the examination of the role of language as an inquiry tool, communication device, and identity maker. For instance, a study by Romanowski (2019) focused on the aspect of translanguaging within the framework of International Baccalaureate schools among the Polish linguistic group. This study revealed how multilinguals positively utilize their linguistic resources as meaning makers and class participants alike. On the other hand, focusing on an entirely new context study, the Turkish investigation by Eflanili & Onur (2022), *Inquiry-Based Language Classes Applied in International Baccalaureate*, indicates how interdisciplinary projects facilitate learners' interconnected understandings of both concept and linguistic performance, which utilized language as both discipline and tool for communication. In an entirely new context, Chaerunnisa & Bachtiar (2024), focusing on Indonesian schools, indicates how teachers utilise the meaning-making process via reflective practice for raising global awareness via LA tools and methods effectively. However, from a new point of view, the investigation by Jiménez & Dack (2024), focusing on Ecuador's International Baccalaureate EFL Classrooms within the context of social justice themes, revealed how having actual social contexts at stake within the classroom enhances communicative competence in oral communication among the students effectively. However, as Loseke (2025), within the context of resource utility and linguistic diversity, still presses the necessity for culturally-responsive education pedagogues within the International Baccalaureate framework context.

METHODS

The study adopted the systematic literature review to map and synthesise the current research on English learning within the International Baccalaureate framework. The study followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) in order to ensure the transparency, validity, and reliability of the study. This research employed a four-phase PRISMA Flow Diagram. The identification phase involved locating relevant studies through specific search terms to ensure that studies related to English learning and Language Acquisition within the International Baccalaureate curriculum. Data were gathered from five major academic databases, namely Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, SAGE Journals, ERIC, and Scopus. The search string used combination of Boolean operators such as: "International Baccalaureate", "Language Acquisition", "English Learning", and "Language Teaching".

The screening phase entailed eliminating any repeated studies, in addition to using their titles and abstracts in order to eliminate studies that were beyond the scope of analysis. Studies that were accepted in this step then underwent the eligibility phase for a comprehensive appraisal of their validity and relevance using specific inclusion criteria. The included criteria of the selected source are as follows: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles, (2) published within the last ten years (2015-2025), (3) focused on English learning and teaching within the language acquisition subject, (4) written in the English language. Lastly, in the inclusion stage, studies that fitted all criteria were retained for analysis in order to form a valid pool of literature for synthesis.

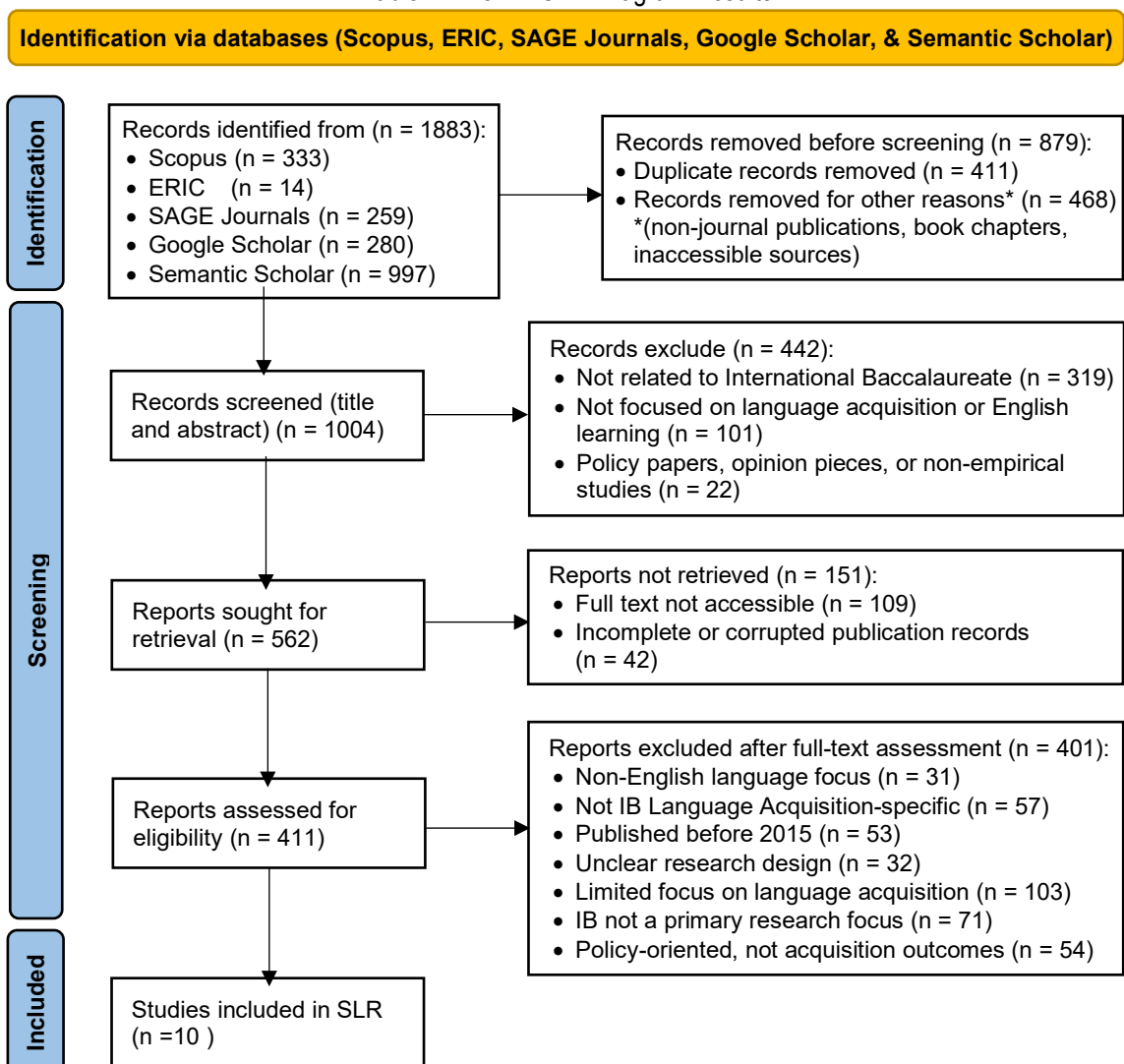
Once the articles had been chosen for analysis, the data were then subjected to thematic synthesis adapted from Thomas & Harden (2008). This process followed several steps. First, all

included studies were read repeatedly in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of their research focus, methodology, and findings. Next, significant findings and recurrent ideas concerning the implementation of Language Acquisition at the International Baccalaureate programme were coded. Third, related codes were classified into categories according to the conceptual connections between the findings. Several themes emerged in the course for the analysis, such as inquiry-based learning, critical thinking, multilingualism, identity formation and implementation issues. Finally, these themes were synthesised and critically analysed to explore the potentials and challenges of Language Acquisition within the International Baccalaureate curriculum framework.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the literature selection stages following the PRISMA guidelines, 1,238 articles were identified from five main databases, namely Scopus, ERIC, SAGE Journals, Google Scholar, and Semantic Scholar. After undergoing a multi-layered screening process that included the removal of duplicates, assessment of titles and abstracts, and evaluation of eligibility based on predetermined inclusion criteria, ten articles were deemed eligible and included in the final synthesis stage. The selection and screening process for this study is presented in detail in the following PRISMA Flow Diagram.

Table 1. The PRISMA Diagram Results



After determining the included articles, a review of the general characteristics of the ten studies was conducted to obtain an overview of the research context, methodological approach, and main findings reported. The included studies represent the context of International Baccalaureate education in various countries, reflecting the global nature of the International Baccalaureate curriculum. In terms of methodology, most studies used qualitative approaches, such as case studies, ethnography, and document analysis, while several other studies combined qualitative and quantitative methods. A summary of the characteristics of the studies analysed is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Characteristics of Included Studies

Author(s) & Year	Country / Context	Methodology	Key Findings
Shah, A. (2024)	Japan	Qualitative ethnography (participant observation, interviews, thematic analysis)	Whiteness influences linguistic and pedagogical norms in International Baccalaureate teacher education; tensions over language use and global English reflect deeper cultural and epistemic inequalities.
Maryono, D.M. & Emilia, E. (2021)	Indonesia	Case study; curriculum analysis via document/text analysis	The study examined the English (Language Acquisition) curriculum in the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme. It found that the curriculum applies a learner-centred ideology with collaborative learning to build communicative skills, and is influenced by Tyler's curriculum model elements including objectives, content, activities, and assessment.
Toker, Z. (2021)	Turkey	Qualitative; reflective narrative with teacher perceptions	Explores teachers' reflective thoughts and perceptions about adaptation to the International Baccalaureate related contexts. Finds that teacher beliefs, curriculum adaptation practices, and local educational factors shape language instruction, reflecting teacher challenges and adaptive strategies.
Barabas, C. D. (2018)	China	Conceptual curriculum design; literature review orientation	Proposes a preparatory English programme design for Chinese learners entering International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, linking curriculum design concepts to preparatory language needs. Emphasizes active learning strategies and sociocultural language learning aspects, although not yet implemented empirically.
Kimura, M. & Umetsu, S. (2025)	Japan	Qualitative case study; classroom-based research using student reflections and thematic analysis	The study investigates English learning experiences of students in International Baccalaureate programmes in Japan. Findings show that International Baccalaureate pedagogy supports communicative competence, learner autonomy, and critical thinking, but students face challenges related to academic English demands, assessment expectations, and balancing local educational norms with International Baccalaureate language practices.
Badham, L., Meadows, M. & Baird, J. (2025)	United Kingdom	Quantitative assessment comparability study using Rasch Partial Credit Model (PCM)	Explores construct comparability across different language versions of International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme assessments. Shows that different construct-linking approaches yield varying difficulty rankings and highlights conceptual and statistical limits of post-hoc comparability analyses.

Author(s) & Year	Country / Context	Methodology	Key Findings
Huckle, J. (2021)	United Kingdom	Qualitative policy analysis / document analysis	Analyses multiple International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme policy documents through the lens of <i>multilingualism and the 'multilingual turn'</i> . Argues that International Baccalaureate approaches are underpinned by a monolingual bias, limiting recognition of multilingual learners' linguistic knowledge and experience.
Clark, J. & Terrett, M. (2025)	China	Qualitative case study / focus group thematic analysis	Explores teachers' perceptions of transitioning from a Two-Model system (separate national & International Baccalaureate curricula) back to a unified One-Model system. Highlights challenges with assessment tensions, curriculum integration, English language instruction models, and teacher identity as they negotiate International Baccalaureate implementation within national policy constraints.
Romanowski, P. (2019)	Poland	Qualitative (textual & thematic analysis of interviews and classroom discourse)	Investigates teacher beliefs and translanguaging practices related to multilingual language teaching in International Baccalaureate classroom environments. Finds that teachers navigate tensions between International Baccalaureate language policy and local expectations, emphasizing the role of classroom interaction and multilingual pedagogies.
McKeown, J. & Ramadori, M. (2022)	Turkey	Qualitative, classroom-based ethnographic study with surveys & observational data	Investigates development of <i>language learner identity</i> in English courses among high school students. Finds that participation in International Baccalaureate English A & B influences students' perceptions of themselves as learners and inquirers, increases confidence and language proficiency, and highlights the importance of interactions and language practices in identity development.

After the data categorisation was carried out, several thematic patterns began to emerge from all the studies analysed, which show potential and challenges compared to the English language learning done in a non-International Baccalaureate environment.

Language as Meaning-Making and Identity Construction

One of the findings is the repositioning of language learning from an object of instruction into a medium for constructing meaning and shaping learner identity. The English language learning of the IB curriculum does not focus on language skills such as grammar or vocabulary. Instead, language learning is one step within the larger process of making sense of meaning, engaging with information, and interacting socially. Maryono and Emilia (2022) For instance, demonstrate that the structure of IB Language Acquisition is grounded in communication and interaction, where language becomes a tool for understanding in the classroom practice. In this context, language functions less as an isolated linguistic target and more as a tool through which learners explore issues and construct understanding collaboratively. Similar tendencies also appear in McKeown and Ramadori's (2022) ethnographic findings, where students gradually developed what the authors describe as a "language learner identity" through repeated participation in classroom interaction.

Their findings suggest that identity formation in IB Language Acquisition does not emerge incidentally from language exposure alone. Rather, it develops through continuous participation in communicative practices that position students as contributors within the learning process. What becomes noticeable across these studies is that language learning in the IB framework is closely tied to students' awareness of how meaning itself is constructed. Shah (2025) argues that IB Language Acquisition carries particular epistemological assumptions regarding whose knowledge, discourse, and communicative practices are legitimized within international education spaces. This point complicates the view that language learning should be ideologically neutral (Anya, 2021). While students are encouraged to interpret, reflect, and articulate perspectives through English, the process simultaneously introduces them to particular norms of reasoning, communication, and knowledge production associated with global academic discourse. In this regard, language learning in the IB context also becomes a process of entering specific epistemic communities.

This discovery becomes significant in that it implies a closer relationship between IB Language Acquisition and theories that view language acquisition from sociocultural and constructivist frameworks than structural approaches that emphasize mainly linguistic form. In other words, language serves as an integral part of cognition and society (Getie, 2020). Learners employ their command of English for constructing meanings, defending their perspectives, and situating themselves socially. At the same time, the reviewed studies also reveal that identity construction within IB Language Acquisition is inseparable from wider relations of power surrounding global English.

Furthermore, Gardner-McTaggart (2016) notes that international education spaces often carry implicit assumptions about valued forms of communication and cultural capital. This creates a tension within the IB framework itself. On one hand, students are encouraged to develop voice, agency, and intercultural awareness through language. On the other hand, participation in these spaces still tends to privilege forms of expression associated with internationally dominant English-speaking discourses. Consequently, the process of "becoming" an IB language learner may also involve adaptation toward particular linguistic and cultural norms that are treated as globally legitimate. Therefore, these findings suggest that the potential of IB Language Acquisition in supporting deep learning lies in its treatment of language as an interpretive and social practice. Deep learning in this context does not simply refer to students' ability to remember content or demonstrate linguistic proficiency. It emerges through students' capacity to use language for interpretation, reflection, negotiation of meaning, and participation in complex social discourse. However, the findings also indicate that these processes remain embedded within broader ideological structures that shape whose language practices and forms of knowledge gain legitimacy within international education contexts.

Inquiry, Conceptual Understanding, and Critical Thinking

Another finding concerns the relationship between inquiry, conceptual understanding, and the development of critical thinking within IB Language Acquisition. Language in the IB curriculum is a tool of a broader intellectual process through which students investigate ideas, formulate interpretations, and construct arguments. In this context, language learning becomes deeply connected to how students think, question, and reason during classroom interaction. According to Eflanili and Onur (2022), Students were involved in inquiry-based interdisciplinary activities that enabled them to link their language acquisition activities with conceptually oriented discussions and contextualized scenarios. Generally, the use of English in the discussed study is less focused on

memorizing subject matter and more inclined towards exploring problems and analyzing viewpoints.

This orientation becomes particularly significant when viewed in relation to deep learning. The IB Language Acquisition encourages students to move beyond surface-level comprehension because language activities are frequently tied to interpretation, analysis, and reflection. Toker (2021), for example, found that teachers within IB-related contexts associated language instruction with students' ability to evaluate ideas, articulate reasoning, and respond critically to different viewpoints. Likewise, Kimura and Umetsu (2025) observed that students in IB programmes were expected to connect language use with conceptual themes and wider social contexts, which required them to continuously negotiate meaning instead of only reproduce memorised forms of language. Such findings indicate that critical thinking in IB Language Acquisition is embedded within the process of communication itself. Students are expected to justify positions, organise interpretations, and engage with abstract ideas through language.

These findings reflect a shift away from transmission-oriented language instruction toward a conception of language learning as disciplinary and conceptual engagement (Wong & Liem, 2022). The role of English in IB classrooms extends into the domain of reasoning and knowledge construction. Students are expected to use language to examine themes, compare perspectives, and develop interpretations connected to global and social realities. This explains why conceptual learning repeatedly appears across the reviewed studies as a defining feature of IB pedagogy. Language learning is treated as inseparable from conceptual inquiry because understanding is expected to emerge through reflection, dialogue, and intellectual engagement with issues rather than through procedural completion of classroom exercises.

At the same time, the review shows that the implementation of inquiry and conceptual learning is not that straightforward. Though IB philosophy puts strong emphasis on students' agency and reflective inquiry, the research demonstrates that maintaining the approach is challenging. Specifically, Toker (2021) point to the influence that teachers' beliefs and educational expectations associated with the implementation of IB may have on the nature of inquiry-based pedagogy. Under certain circumstances, inquiry is reduced to a set of routines instead of the genuine exploration of ideas. Such issues may arise due to a lack of comprehension of IB philosophy, as noted by Barabas (2018). He noted that IB Language Acquisition can contribute to enhanced outcomes only when teachers adopt and adapt IB's core concepts according to their local context. Inquiry implemented as classroom procedures ensures that even if students participate in 'student-centred' activities, they do so in dependence and in a limited way since expected outcomes of each lesson are pre-set. In other words, the challenge is not implementing the term "inquiry" but ensuring that the process is genuine.

Nevertheless, the reviewed works confirm that there are many opportunities for improving learning through the IB Language Acquisition program. By integrating learning languages with conceptual learning, inquiry, and reflective communication, IB language acquisition provides many opportunities for deep learning. However, the discussed studies prove that the implementation of the discussed pedagogical approaches is vulnerable to various challenges associated with local practices and expectations. Therefore, inquiry in IB Language Acquisition should not be perceived as a set of instructions but as an approach that needs to be considered carefully by the teachers.

Multilingualism and Inclusive Language Classroom

One reviewed study also points toward a growing emphasis on multilingualism within IB Language Acquisition, particularly through classroom practices that allow students to draw upon more than one linguistic resource during learning. However, the significance of this finding also lies in how these practices reshape assumptions about language learning itself. Multilingualism appears connected to broader attempts to challenge the long-standing tendency in English language education to separate “proper” monolingualism learning from students’ existing linguistic and cultural backgrounds. According to Romanowski (2019), teachers in multilingual IB classrooms often switch between languages in their interactions, especially when their students encounter challenging ideas or engage in abstractions. In this context, translanguaging served as a means of continuing the conversation and engaging with the content conceptually rather than just making up for students’ deficiencies in English proficiency.

The phenomenon changes the meaning of using the first language from a compensatory measure to a key component of the learning process. On the other hand, the study also demonstrates that the concept of translanguaging adds an element of unpredictability to assumptions regarding classroom language performance. Multilingual interaction can facilitate meaning-making in the course of learning; nevertheless, students are supposed to deliver their findings using coherent academic English. Thus, there is a contradiction between the flexibility of meaning-making processes based on multilingual interaction and the necessity of coherent language performance in the context of traditional educational practices. According to Mendoza et al. (2024), translanguaging cannot and should not be treated as a universally liberating practice irrespective of the context and institutional environment. It appears that multilingual pedagogies continue to be constrained by the expectations associated with the classroom language use, assessment procedures, etc. Thus, from the perspective of the reviewed study, the relationship between language, cognition, and learning needs to be reconsidered. The reviewed study highlights the fact that meaning-making is not acquired through individual linguistic systems; instead, it is an interactive process that involves learning using multiple linguistic means.

The mismatch between IB Philosophy and Classroom Practice

Apart from its potential, another recurrent theme found throughout the studies is the issue of the divide between the philosophy behind IB Language Acquisition and the application of said philosophy to classroom practice. Whereas inquiry, learner-centeredness, conceptual understandings, and reflection are the core aspects of IB pedagogy, research on the matter shows that there might be issues when it comes to incorporating these concepts into actual classroom practice, in which language acquisition takes on a procedural and highly structured nature. This dilemma keeps recurring when looking into research on teachers’ experience with IB practices. As shown by Toker (2021), there were situations where teachers would adopt their methods of inquiry-based teaching based on local requirements. Inquiry learning, in some instances, did not serve as a process of discovery, but rather as an approach meant to fulfil the curriculum goals efficiently within a structured class setup. Another example is where Kimura & Umetsu (2025) identified that students faced a dilemma regarding the expectation of IB practices for independent thinking versus local educational settings that emphasize accuracy and test results.

This question gains more significance in the context of literature on curriculum enactment. Specifically, Poulton stated that educational reforms are always interpreted in their own way by teachers due to the influence of institutional circumstances, beliefs, and practical constraints

(Poulton, 2020). He argued that the process of curriculum enactment can be seen as a form of teacher's "sense" where teachers negotiate new pedagogical concepts instead of implementing them strictly. According to this approach, the problem found in IB Language Acquisition cannot be considered an example of teachers' misinterpretation of the curriculum. Instead, this is evidence of the intricate process of shaping curriculum ideas with teaching needs.

In addition to this, According to Barabas (2018), the philosophy behind the process of inquiry is prone to simplification during its implementation when teachers lack understanding of the philosophical basis of IB pedagogy, they are likely to replicate inquiry as a teaching approach, not as an approach to thinking. Consequently, although these lessons could be considered student-centred, they are likely to have predefined expected results, preconceived interpretations, and predetermined patterns of students' participation. Therefore, in such instances, inquiry can become a kind of a performative action rather than a truly transformative process. Even though students will look like participants, they will have little opportunity to experience uncertainty, raise doubts, or engage with ideas differently. This finding corresponds to the current state of affairs described in another research. For instance, Fawns et al. (2023) concludes that the practice of inquiry-based learning tends to become a routine action once institutions prefer to ensure consistent and quantifiable outcomes, curriculum completion, and test performance to actual exploration of topics.

This explains why many IB studies reveal contradictions between pedagogical flexibility and institutions' accountability. It is important to note that the discussed literature points to the idea that such conflict is more structural than methodological. Inquiry-based teaching involves an element of uncertainty, debate, and risks in thinking, while formal education tends to rely on predictability, efficiency, and stable assessment practices. Thus, teachers working in the context of IB teaching should consistently balance their commitment to the philosophic ideals of inquiry and institutionally-driven requirements related to achieving academic success and delivering curricula. From this perspective, it can be argued that the effectiveness of IB Language Acquisition should not be explained only by reference to curriculum design and philosophical ideals. The analyzed literature points out that successful learning processes in IB classrooms significantly depend on teachers' interpretation and negotiation of inquiry-based teaching under particular institutional circumstances. In other words, the key question is not whether inquiry-based teaching takes place within IB classrooms; it is about how much IB classrooms enable students to think conceptually via inquiry.

Readiness and Institutional Inequality

The last finding also found that the challenge of IB Language Acquisition for supporting deep learning is closely tied to questions of assessment readiness and institutional inequality. Across the literature, a recurring tension emerges between the philosophical commitment of the IB toward equitable learning and the uneven conditions under which students and schools are expected to demonstrate academic performance. Assessment within IB contexts is criticised for being deeply connected to issues of linguistic preparedness, institutional resources, and access to academic support. Several studies suggest that the demands of IB assessment often extend beyond its potential.

For example, Kimura and Umetsu (2025) have found that multilingual students in IB programs were not just having trouble understanding content; rather, they had problems with the academic language practices needed to articulate their reasoning in an appropriate manner in assessments. The problem of multilingual students in IB programs is not one that can be attributed

simply to their lack of fluency in English. Many students will have a full understanding of the ideas being taught, yet they will have difficulties in communicating those ideas because of the level of academic language involved. For multilingual learners, the challenge therefore lies not only in understanding content, but in translating their understanding into forms of expression recognised as academically appropriate within international education contexts. This indicates that assessment performance is shaped not only by cognitive understanding but also by students' access to and familiarity with dominant academic discourse practices. Similar concerns appear in Badham et al., (2025) on multilingual assessment comparability in the IB Diploma Programme. Their findings demonstrate that even when assessments are designed around shared constructs, achieving equivalence across languages remains highly complicated because linguistic variation, cultural interpretation, and academic discourse conventions may shape how performance is interpreted and measured.

As evidenced above, institutional inequities appear to be a significant factor influencing the process of implementing curriculum principles. According to Clark and Terrett (2025), institutions with adequate institutional resources and higher exposure to IB programs managed to maintain inquiry-based learning and assessment practices successfully. At the same time, institutions subjected to more rigid structural limitations tended to face challenges while reconciling the demands of local curricula, English language skills, and assessments conducted within the IB program. Hence, it can be concluded that the practice of IB Language Acquisition is unlikely to be identical for all educational settings.

This problem undermines the meritocratic principles frequently assumed by international education programs. Maire and Windle (2022) have shown how the implementation of the IB curriculum, might unwittingly contribute to educational stratification insofar as disparities in resource availability and preparation in educational institutions and among students. In this context, the question is not whether the IB assessment process is rigorous but whether all students are equally equipped to succeed within these rigorous academic requirements. Although none of the reviewed studies criticises that the assessment procedures employed within IB programs lack educational value, they highlight the gap between the ideal of equity-oriented deep learning and practical constraints. While inquiry learning, conceptual understanding, and multilingualism might be actively promoted pedagogically, students are still expected to prove their success through highly structured assessment procedures that rely on sophisticated academic literacy and institutional frameworks. Thus, these findings suggest that deep learning within IB Language Acquisition cannot be separated from questions of assessment access and institutional capacity. The reviewed literature indicates that students' ability to participate meaningfully in IB learning environments depends not only on pedagogical philosophy, but also on whether schools and learners possess the linguistic, academic, and structural resources necessary to navigate the demands of internationalised assessment systems.

CONCLUSION

Findings show that IB Language Acquisition places language learning within a wider process of meaning-making, identity construction, inquiry, conceptual engagement, critical thinking, and a multilingual learning perspective. Across the reviewed studies, English language learning in the IB curriculum engages learners to interpret ideas, discuss issues, build arguments, and participate in classroom interaction connected to real-world contexts. This indicates a shift in how

language learning is understood from a traditional curriculum perspective to an IB perspective. Language is closely connected with thinking, reflection, identity formation, and participation in learning processes. The studies also suggest that inquiry-based learning, multilingual interaction, and conceptual discussion support deeper learning experiences because students are encouraged to explore ideas actively and communicate understanding through language. Through this review, the study offers a broader view of IB Language Acquisition as an approach that connects language learning with cognitive and social learning processes within international education.

At the same time, our findings also show that the implementation of these ideas remains shaped by many contextual challenges. Several studies describe how inquiry activities sometimes become procedural classroom routines, multilingual practices still operate alongside strong academic English expectations, and assessment demands may disadvantage students from different linguistic and educational backgrounds. In many cases, the success of IB Language Acquisition depends heavily on teachers' interpretations, school support systems, and students' readiness to work within academically demanding environments. This study is limited by its reliance on previously published research, much of which focuses on particular IB contexts and qualitative perspectives. Future studies could examine how deep learning develops over longer periods of classroom practice and explores how assessment, multilingual participation, and local educational cultures influence IB Language Acquisition across different regions and school settings.

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