Investigating a Language Learner Identity in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

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Abstract
This localized, classroom-based, qualitative ethnographic study, conducted during 2019-2021 at a foreign national, English-medium high school in Türkiye investigates the development of a language learner identity in the English courses of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. The target population is mixed-gender high school students enrolled in the Diploma Programme. In the entrance and exit course surveys, students disclosed their views about themselves as language learners, their impressions of language learner assumptions, tacit and explicit teacher expectations, and their reactions to the International Baccalaureate syllabus and their perceived progress. Each of these factors had a significant but not equal impact on their choice to study English A: Literature and Language, either at standard level or higher level or English B: Language Acquisition higher level. The extent of the development of a language learner identity aligned to the language policies of the International Baccalaureate is seen through the student survey responses and the instructors’ anecdotal commentary. A language learner identity can be seen to develop within the context of the program as students experience improvement in their language skills, make shifts in perspectives, and interact in the target language with others in the school environment. The study begins to fill a gap related to language identity development in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme English courses and may be of interest to Diploma Programme teachers, coordinators, and school policymakers.

Keywords: English A higher level, English B higher level, English language learning, International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, language learner identity

Introduction

Based on feedback from high school students enrolled in an English B higher level course, the course instructors reflected on various reasons why English B higher level students would identify themselves as deficient in English language ability when they compared themselves to IB students enrolled in English A courses. Motivated to investigate student inquiries regarding the choice of language course and their level of language development, the instructors posed a research question: To what extent is there a language learner identity in the IBDP? The current study will demonstrate the development of a language learner identity in the IBDP.

In this study, the authors provide a context for the investigation including the background of the high school where the study took place, the target population, and the process students used to choose English courses within the IBDP structure. The authors outline the research methods with details of the design and administration of the surveys. The results from the analysis of the survey support the claim of an IBDP language learner identity and its implications.

The study was conducted at a private secondary school in Istanbul (UAA, 2022). The high school is a one-way dual language Turkish/English learning environment. Upon acceptance to the school, students are tested with the Versant English Placement Test (VEPT: Pearson, 2022) and placed into preparatory classes based on those results following CEFR categories (Figure 1): beginner (A2-B1), intermediate (B1-B2), or upper intermediate (B2-C1). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2022) is a set of standards that describes the proficiencies of foreign language learners using descriptors for each level of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Figure 1. IELTS in CEFR Scale Relation (IELTS, 2021)
During their five years at the high school, student progress in English is monitored by compiling data which includes student lexile scores and the results of the Versant English Placement Test. The VEPT and lexile testing are administered at the end of the prep year and at the end of Grade Nine. The data gathering for English culminates with the results of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS, 2022) exam given at the end of Grade 11.

The school population is homogeneously Turkish and is considered a second language (L2) environment where English serves as the medium of instruction. The level of English among recent graduates ranges from fluently bilingual to functionally bilingual, with an exit IELTS average score of 7.6 (UAA, 2022a). Students in this one-way dual language environment exemplify the working definition of a bilingual individual who is “equally proficient in the alternative use of two different languages, though not necessarily perfectly” (Özşen, et. al., 2020, p. 41).

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme is an academically challenging curriculum for students completing their final two years of secondary education that prepares them for success at university and life beyond (IB, 2022b). The IBDP plays a significant part in a student’s journey toward successful acceptance into institutions of higher education internationally.

The IBDP is can be completed in various languages and at this private high school it is taught in English with the exception of Turkish A: Literature, and Turkey in the Twentieth Century (TTTC) courses (UAA, 2022b). All Grade Nine students are eligible to apply for a place in the IBDP without a language requirement due to the high emphasis already placed on learning English at the school. All of the IBDP students entering Grade 10 study an English curriculum aligned to English A: Language and Literature. In the spring semester of the first year of the IBDP, the IB English faculty and the IBDP Coordinator provided students with information about the Grade 11 English course choices.

When selecting courses, students seek information from various sources such as teachers, peers, the IB website, or recent graduates. They then choose either English Language A: Language and Literature (HL or SL), or English Language B: Language Acquisition (HL). English B, designed as a language acquisition course for students with prior knowledge of English, provides the necessary skills to enable students to communicate successfully in English. The English A: Language and Literature course enables students to develop a critical understanding and interpretation of literary and non-literary texts, including textual analysis and literary conventions (IB, 2022a).

The IB supports a progression of language fluency over time beginning with Basic Interpersonal Skills (BICS) and translanguaging (Cummins, 2000) to Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). IB language policy (2012) states [that] “language learning, multilingualism and the development of critical literacy are considered important factors in promoting intercultural awareness and international-mindedness, which are integral to the organization’s mission” (p. 9). Focusing on aspects of multilingual learning, the IB moved away from a monoglossic view of acquiring a separate additional language emphasizing that “language learners develop and integrate new language practices into a complex dynamic multilingual repertoire” (IB, 2012:8). Highlighting this linguistic distinction, students study a language course in their best language, and in at least one other language (IB, 2022a). At the high school where the study was conducted, Turkish A is the best language course offered at either standard level (SL) or higher level (HL). Students choosing English as the additional language have a choice of English A: Literature and Language, in either SL or HL, or English BHL.
Investigating a Language Learner Identity

Previous studies indicated that students negotiate an IBDP pedagogic identity (Cambridge, 2011; McKeown, 2020) and the current study sheds new light on the ways in which IBDP English courses help to shape a language learner identity in interactional settings in a variety of genres, and among different community stakeholders. In their survey responses, students disclose their views about themselves as language learners, their impressions of language learning and teacher expectations, and their reactions to IB-related syllabus requirements. These several factors have a significant, but not equal impact on the development of an IBDP language learner identity.

Literature Review

While language is an important cultural symbol indicating an individual’s identity, studies reveal that identity can likewise impact language learning motivation, particularly in a bilingual or multilingual society (Teng, 2018; 2019). Lobatón (2012) noted that learner identity is brokered through multiple facets: how an individual perceives his/herself; the development of identity through negotiation and reproduction; and, the classroom environment in which learners interact with others using the target language.

Studies indicate that linguistic identity construction is a complex and many-sided phenomenon built on interaction and dependent on time and space (Auer 2007; Bucholtz & Hall 2005). This discourse emphasizes the individual language learner, their linguistic choices and their empowerment toward agency.

In second language education, Teng (2019) demonstrated while investigating learner identity and investment in language learning, that the language learning community affects the formation of the learner identity. Additionally, language learners “who construct a positive identity are willing to exert more effort into their language learning, whereas those who construct a negative identity may exert less effort into their language learning” (p. 44).

Wang (2021) argued that the construction and the verification of a group identity for second language learners will increase a learner’s sense of self-worth which in turn affects their sense of authenticity. Furthermore, Wang demonstrated that language learners might struggle to achieve an authenticity of identity if their language competency cannot match their desired level of expression:

a possible problem to be caused by the inauthenticity of second language identity is unsatisfactory social contact and consequent feeling of isolation. That may happen when an individual keeps holding onto an identity which is difficult to verify due to its imaginative ground. (p. 15)

Investment and personal fulfillment played a significant role in the development of second language learning. As a result, “an awareness of achieving a sense of authenticity in identity construction is helpful to the students' self-understanding and emotional well-being” (Wang, 2021, p.16)

Souto-Manning (2013) showed in her work with elementary school learners that learner identity is closely related to language learning. Language is a key source of linguistic identity that empowers a sense of belonging to a community mediated by the symbolic resource of language. The language learner identity encompasses the diverse ways that learners perceive an understanding of the relationship between themselves and the language. Seen from this perspective, social context influenced the development of a linguistic identity.
Similarly, Man, Bui, and Teng (2018) explored the relationship between social learning environments, investment, and the identity development of learners. Their findings revealed that the investment on language learning was unfixed, dynamic and subject to a changing context. Teng (2019) also illustrated that, the overall self was not single, fixed or permanent, but like a collection of several different, and sometimes even contradictory selves. Indeed, identity is not conceived as a single identity but contains different roles that an individual may employ in varying contexts. (p. 45)

As the development of this language learning is fluid and non-static, learners experience changes in identity, demonstrating that identity and language learning go hand-in-hand (Teng, 2019). Pavlenko and Norton (2007) further argued that language learners’ actual and desired memberships in imagined communities affect their learning trajectories, influencing their agency, motivation, investment, or resistance to learn English.

Methods

In order to gather information related to the research question, the two course instructors chose an ethnographic approach as they were already immersed in the English BHL course and able to observe the students’ language development during their years in the IBDP. A qualitative research method was supplemented by the use of surveys created for English BHL students which included close-ended and open-ended questions. The research process was organic as the surveys developed out of the concerns that students raised about their progress in English.

The instructors administered the initial survey midway through the course, and the students completed the second survey after they had received their final IBDP and IELTS results. The researchers chose to directly administer the questionnaire to this cohort of students as access was readily available and because the school had approved the process. When the first student survey was conducted in Grade 11, the target population was 22 students enrolled in English BHL (14 males, eight females), all Turkish citizens aged 17-18, whose mother tongue was Turkish.

The first survey consisted of fifteen questions. The first question asked students how they gained knowledge and information about IBDP English courses and their content:

1. How did I learn about the Language B option?
The next nine Likert-scale statements ranged from (1) very dissatisfied to (5) very satisfied. Students rated their expectations and satisfaction levels of course content and skill development:

2. English Language B HL met my expectations.
3. My satisfaction with the English Language B HL content.
4. My satisfaction with the English Language B HL activities.
5. My satisfaction with my development of comprehension.
6. My satisfaction with participation and speaking.
7. My satisfaction with the content.
8. My satisfaction with writing development and language use.
10. My commitment of time devoted to this course.

The remaining five open-ended questions allowed students to express their opinions regarding the course content and elicited their perceptions of themselves as language learners.
11. List the factors that led me to choose English B.
12. How did Language B define me as a language learner and user?
13. What was most memorable about my learning? List your highlights.
14. Add your comments about the course.
15. Add your comments about your progress.

The second survey conducted at the completion of the IBDP exams in early January 2022, consisted of nine questions where students rated their overall satisfaction with their decision to choose English BHL, their satisfaction with their grades in both the IBDP and IELTS, and their current view as a language learner exiting the IBDP:

1. In retrospect, did I make the right decision to study English B HL?
2. If I had to do it all over again, would I still study English B HL?
3. Would I recommend another student to choose English B HL?
4. Does my IB English grade accurately reflect my English language acquisition to date?
5. Does my IB result reflect my overall English development in the B HL course?
6. Do I feel more confident about my English abilities after completing B HL English?
7. Does my IELTS score accurately reflect my language level at this time?
8. I believe that my IELTS scores and B HL results together accurately represent my language acquisition level.
9. Please add any additional comments on how you currently feel as an English speaker.

Survey Results

First Survey

From a total of 22 students enrolled in the BHL class, 16 students responded to the survey. The first question regarding student access to information about English B indicated that students learned about the course equally through friends and English teachers: 37.5% answered from their English teachers and 37.5% answered from their peers. 18.8% of students spoke with the IB Coordinator about their English course selection, and approximately 6% of the students surveyed consulted with teachers from other IB courses. It was noteworthy that all students explored various ways to determine which course was most suitable as a possible match and used these lenses to view themselves as language learners.

The Likert-scale survey questions (see Table 1) were separated into three categories: 1) student expectations of the English B course; 2) student current satisfaction with the English B course; and, 3) student satisfaction with their development. The course met the expectations of 87.6% of students, divided equally with 43.8% being either very satisfied or satisfied with the class; 6.3% remained neutral in their response, while 9.3% were unsatisfied.

Questions regarding student satisfaction with the course were divided into areas of content, activities and teacher interaction. 56.3% of students were very satisfied with the course content, 37.5% satisfied and 6.3% were very unsatisfied with course content. Respectively, 43.8% of the students were either very satisfied or satisfied with classroom activities, and 12.5% answered neutral or no opinion. 87.5% of the students were very satisfied with teacher interaction, 6.3% were satisfied and 6.3% responded that they were unsatisfied with teacher interaction.
Questions about student satisfaction with their development were divided into areas of comprehension, communication, writing and time management: 50% of students were very satisfied with their development in English comprehension, 31.3% satisfied, 12.5% answered neutral and 6.3% were unsatisfied with their development in English comprehension. As for communication, 43.8% of students surveyed were very satisfied with their development in class participation and speaking skills, 25% were satisfied, 25% remained neutral and 6.3% were unsatisfied with their development in communication. 31.3% of students were very satisfied with their writing skills development, 25% satisfied, 25% remained neutral, 6.3% responded that they were unsatisfied and 6.3% were very unsatisfied with their development in writing skills.

Lastly, survey responses demonstrated 31.3% of students were very satisfied, 56.3% were satisfied, 6.3% responded as neutral and 6.3% were unsatisfied with their time commitment to the English B course.

Table 1. Summary of First Survey Student Responses: Questions 2-10 (recorded as %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question no.</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>31.3</td>
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<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the remaining open-ended questions, students expressed themselves about their choices, expectations and perceived language development. The following comments are taken from the students’ original survey responses.

Factors and influences that led students to choose English B:
- Diversity in course material.
- I wanted to get a 4th HL class.
- It seemed like a great option for my own future plans, also a fun course to both learn new things and develop my (speaking) skills.
- I had to improve my english and English A did not improve my english
- I thought that creative writings were more fascinating than analyzing the written ones.
• The fact that English B focuses on the usage of the language rather than the literature.

Students define themselves as language learners and users through English B:
• It made me develop extensive descriptive language while forcing me out of my comfort zone. For instance, in fields like the arts unit, I noticed advancement throughout the course.
• With this course, I have become a person who tries to talk and communicate more in English and does not hesitate to improve herself.
• It defined me as an effective language user
• I didn't see major changes, but I'm content with that
• A more global English user

Memorable moments in their learning and development:
• I remember our discussion of art.
• [The] Macbeth unit was the best. Even though I am not entirely into literary analysis, I was welcome to share my opinions. I was encouraged constantly through teacher interactions.
• I don't think there are "highlights" in my English B experience. Instead, I look at the course [as] a general picture. When I think about English B, what I remember is the intriguing discussions we had and the passionate acting/learning we did.
• This class has been the one which I didn't see as work (like maths, physics) but as a hobby. I enjoyed every second of it and each second I spent in this class was a highlight.
• Reading Macbeth and brainstorming as a whole class to see different opinions from everyone.

Second Survey
By the end of the first semester of the second year of the IBDP, the English BHL class had 19 students. Of these 19 students, 10 of them responded to the second survey. The first three questions dealt with their decision to choose Language B and their recommendations for the course to other students. All of the respondents agreed that they had made the correct decision and would recommend Language B as a course of study. The next three questions dealt with students’ grade satisfaction as a reflection of their language acquisition and development. 80% of students answered positively regarding their grade outcomes.

One additional question provided an opportunity for students to reflect on their levels of confidence in their English abilities after the completion of the Language B course. The following student response summed up the majority view of the BHL experience:

English BHL is the best decision anyone can make in the whole IB program. It is an easy seven with class material that is fun to comprehend. Almost all of my friends who chose A SL/HL (apart from the ones interested in a language-based career) regretted not choosing B HL.

From the findings presented, students were satisfied with the choice they made to undertake a language acquisition course, and it is reasonable to conclude that this decision was linked to the language learner identity with which the students entered the course. The comments reflect the changes the students experienced concerning their language development, their awareness of those changes, and the effect it had on them as they concluded the course, more confident in their abilities.
Discussion

In reviewing the survey results, students reflected on their perception of themselves as changing language learners, supporting the premise that identity is dynamic (Teng, 2019). Reacting to the first question regarding the choice of which course to take, information shared by teachers and friends had the greatest impact on their decision to study either English A or B. That the majority of students looked to family, friends and teachers for advice about English course selection may shed some light on how students initially saw themselves as language learners: language identity was influenced by the perceptions of student success or failure and was linked to external approval or validation.

While some students may have relied on how other people perceived their language skills and abilities, other student comments demonstrated a more strategic decision-making process about which course to take. For example, “I will study physics, I do not need [to study] literature”, “I am going to pursue a science-driven career”. The majority of the students choosing English B indicated that they would enter a field of study focused on science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM). Choosing an English course that supported this aim, provided a further insight into how they perceived themselves as language learners.

Pavlenko and Norton (2007) argued that language learners’ actual and desired memberships in imagined communities affect their learning trajectories. In her exploration of identity and language learning, Souto-Manning (2013) found that for learners to invest in a target language a goal was needed, e.g., further education, and to meet that goal the learner adopted different roles. Based on these types of considerations, many students decided on English B based on their projected aims. As they required specific outcomes in order to secure a place at the universities which they intended to study, they chose an English course in which a high score was more achievable and consequently ended up with high levels of satisfaction. One student succinctly expressed this view, “I wanted to choose an English class where I could get a 7”.

Murray and Kojima (2007) demonstrated that a learner’s positive experience and personal fulfillment strengthen identity development and further illustrated how self-perception was an important aspect of identity formation. In these responses, it became clear that many students had assimilated a picture of themselves as language learners associated with their language identity, but others resonated differently. For example, when several students out-performed their self-perceptions and received higher results than expected, they recognized that they might have been able to do English A successfully. They chose not to take the English A course because they felt unsure about their grade outcomes and were wary of their language abilities.

Other students expressed interest in the differences between A and B course content and its relevance to their language acquisition: “English A was too advanced for me and I did not like the content”, “My class was very good at English therefore I felt uncomfortable speaking in [class]”, “I did not believe that I needed to take English A; English B would be sufficient for me. I also liked the scope of the course … it allowed us to develop ourselves in different areas”. Comments such as these suggest that upon reflection students self-identified as B language learners. They had made a conscious choice to further their own language growth supporting the premise of Man, Bui, and Teng (2018) that investment in language learning is dynamic and subject to a changing context.

In the second open-ended question, students reflected on themselves as language learners and shared how their perceptions as English learners changed throughout the IB Diploma. As mentioned previously, in the second semester of Grade 10 when students delved deeper into English literary
skills, they then chose to study either English A or English B. When they reflected on themselves as language learners, the students did so based on a one-year intensive English B course. Initially they had focused on skill levels, and through the process they came to view their language learning as part of an organic dynamic process rather than a linear progression of skill development or focused on literary analysis.

Students commented on their growth in interactive communication skills: “I improved my speaking skills and learned a [lot] of vocabulary”; “I was able to communicate and discuss global issues”. Identity negotiation and reproduction took place while learners interacted with others in the target language allowing for the further development of learner self-perception. Various students identified an increase in vocabulary directly related to their sense of self, “I believe my lexile level has advanced and I was less intimidated to speak up.” The transformation in students’ perceptions of themselves as capable and confident communicators in English was as a result of participation with others in the community. This classroom communication allowed for risk-taking in an open-minded yet critical classroom environment. It can be seen that this formation of a language identity takes place within the content and context of debate, dialogue or discussion, and with other people.

Some of the students focused their comments solely on self-concept and their ability to be understood, “[the course] showed me I was a confident speaker and especially a confident writer”. However, other students expressed a more complex understanding of themselves as language learners by focusing on their ability to better understand others and empathize when communicating about world issues. These comments are aligned to Wang’s (2021) notion of authenticity, as students acknowledged an identity evolving dynamically within a community of language learners.

As Lobatón (2012) pointed out, the identity of language learners is multidimensional, as students adopt various roles in the community that the English BHL classroom represents. For example, “[Language B] made me realize that having different points of views is really important in order to understand others”, “I think I became open to new cultures, and different ideas in this class which widened my vision”. Students engaged in a process of understanding another language and different cultures. In doing so, they perceived themselves as language learners in relation to others and experienced a shift in their language learner identity.

In the last open-ended question, students reflected on memorable highlights from the course. Following Teng (2019), student responses revealed a fluidity in which they saw themselves as language learners. They noted that their most memorable aspect of the course was the literature studied: “Before this year I would have thought that I could never analyze and interpret such a piece [of literature], thus working on it was memorable for me”; “Macbeth was the highlight of my own learning journey. It was very enjoyable to read Shakespeare for the first time”. The majority of students chose English BHL because it was less literary-based and they viewed a language acquisition course as easier. Ironically, the most memorable moment identified was reading and discussing Macbeth. This change in perspective regarding the literary component of the course demonstrated the flexibility and fluidity of the student's self-perceptions. It also points to the student’s emerging self-awareness that is part of the dynamic development of a language learner identity.

Students reflected on the diversity of the themes explored in English BHL and the related class discussions: “I loved the art unit. It was a rather different topic to discuss in class, which made it a lot of fun”; “[I like] the journals we wrote about global issues.” Students expressed
enjoyment in both verbal and written communication activities on a variety of themes and topics, especially ones that were new and challenging. The classroom discussions and journal writing activities provided opportunities for students to expand their sense of self beyond their comfort zone, sparking further debate and discussion in which they shared multiple views and offered a variety of opinions.

Furthermore, students stated that they experienced and understood their language learning through writing different text types: “I believe since we analyzed and went through many different text types, I would say this course made me more independent and confident in English”. As language learners, students recognized that writing various text types facilitated their development in communicating in English and that the experience helped them to explore their own language development through multiple lenses. This type of discourse emphasized the individual linguistic choices they made and revealed their empowerment toward agency.

The second survey results reinforced Man, Bui, and Teng’s claim (2018) that language learning occurs within a changing context. All students responded that taking English BHL was the most suitable choice for them and would recommend the course to their peers. However, not all students were satisfied with their grades or what that grade might indicate about their language acquisition. Specifically, IELTS scores in combination with their IB grades illustrated a change in self-perception. Two students responded that their final results did not accurately reflect their language acquisition. As grades are an indicator of their language learner identity development, they recognized this grade gap which did not necessarily reflect a decrease in language acquisition confidence. Instead, it showed an understanding of themselves as successful language learners within a changing context.

Interestingly, student responses revealed a self-identification as language learners more closely aligned to what the IB specifically outlines as the exit language level expectations as seen in Figure 2.

![Figure 2. Benchmarking IB English Courses to the CEFR (NARIC, 2019, p. 9)](image-url)
Students made explicit the tacit IB expectations regarding language standards related to CEFR and IELTS exit levels (see Figure 1) and for IB-CEFR course related language exit expectations (see Figure 2). Students shared that higher language learner expectations in the English B course led them to an improved ability to communicate, and to an increased self-confidence as L2 users. They expressed self-awareness as global English speakers which not only further improved their communication skills, but enabled them to better understand others who held different points of view. As Wang (2021) indicated, the construction and flexibility of a language learner’s identity suggests that this identity extends from the past and stretches into the future.

Under the unusual COVID conditions, students and teachers navigated the course materials interactively in real-time but not always face to face. With the curriculum delivery limitations of online learning, the impetus to investigate what it means to develop a language learner identity within the IBDP was conceived in response to the articulation of student queries, specifically in an Art unit, addressing concerns regarding the validity and utility of studying English BHL. Student engagement and their willingness to seek out new and challenging themes and topics, initially viewed as contrary to their aims as STEM students, increased. Supportive teacher-student cooperation encouraged students to question the changing nature of their identity as language learners eager to communicate in the target language and to share what was happening on their Diploma journey. Both students and educators were committed to working together to see how a student language learner identity developed through the program.

Students who opted for English BHL initially presented a view of themselves as language acquisition learners, noting what they perceived to be their shortcomings, concerns or gaps in language use. Their communication competency is demonstrated through their receptive, productive and interactive skills across a range of contexts and purposes appropriate to the level of the course. Furthermore, they met or surpassed the requirements for IBDP external and internal assessments. By the completion of the Diploma, they were able to critique the program and determine if and how the course had met their expectations and to what degree. They indicated that they had developed the ability to communicate in the target language through studying language skills, themes and texts. In doing so, they developed a conceptual understanding of how a language works and a personal understanding of how their language identity shifted during that process.

Limitations ought to be noted. First, although the purpose of this study was not to generalize to all IBDP learners, future studies could gather data from more IBDP schools. Second, longitudinal studies in observing students’ IBDP language learning experiences could be conducted. Third, more data sources could be collected that could enrich the findings. Nevertheless, the current study provides insights into the development of a language learner identity within the IBDP.

A possible topic for further research may be the linguistic identity development of dual language learners in the IBDP. The degree of proficiency that a functional bilingual needs for that proficiency to influence their identity is an area that does not appear to have been addressed in the literature and is deserving of inquiry.

Conclusions
The study sought to answer the question: to what extent is there a language learner identity in the IBDP. This investigation confirmed that an English language identity was created within the IBDP English courses over the two year period, and that its development had an impact on
language learning motivation. Students developed a greater understanding of themselves as language learners and found their development was part of a dynamic learning process. The current study provided insight into the language learner identity within the IBDP. It may be inferred that this level of insight is unique to these particular circumstances and associated with English Language B, but further research could extend these findings with other languages in the Diploma Programme.

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