

about course content are reinforced and extended by an understanding of why and how people use language to communicate.

In particular, the approach to developing conceptual understandings of language in the DP languages programme is designed using the following guiding principles.

- DP students with experience of the Primary Years Programme (PYP) or the Middle Years Programme (MYP) are provided with frequent opportunities to develop further their conceptual understandings of language (PYP) or their understanding of the key and related concepts in the MYP language and literature and language acquisition courses.
- DP students are encouraged to apply what they already know about other languages and cultures—through formal study or personal experience—in order to enhance their overall learning process.
- DP students are encouraged to consider broad questions about language and culture as appropriate to their course of study in order to develop international-mindedness and increase self-awareness as inquirers in their own learning process.

## Conceptual understanding in studies in language and literature courses

Concepts are vital in studies in language and literature courses since they help organize and guide the study of works across the three areas of exploration. The concepts interact with the three areas of exploration in numerous ways and contribute a sense of continuity in the transition from one area to the next. They also facilitate the process of establishing connections between texts, making it easier for students to identify different ways in which the works they study relate to one another. Although they are not explicitly assessed in any component, the concepts constitute an essential part of a student's investigation and should therefore be included in the discussion of each of the works studied.

The seven concepts that structure the teaching and learning of these courses have been selected because of the central position they occupy in the study of both language and literature. They foreground aspects of linguistic and literary study that have been the focus of attention and inquiry. Brief explanations of the seven concepts are provided. These explanations are not meant to be exhaustive, although they will serve as a guiding set of ideas for the course.

For ideas on how to approach these concepts through class activities, please consult the "Approaches to teaching and approaches to learning in studies in language and literature" section in this guide or the *Language A teacher support material*.

### Identity

When reading texts, students will encounter and interact with a multiplicity of perspectives, voices and characters. It is usual when reading and interpreting a text to assume that the views are to some extent representative of the writer's identity. However, the relationship between an author and the different perspectives and voices they assume when they write is frequently complex, and this makes the concept of identity an elusive one. The figure that emerges from the reading of various texts by the same author adds to the complexity of the discussion. Conversely, the ways in which the identity of a reader comes into play at the moment of reading a text are equally central to the analysis of the act of reading and interpretation.

### Culture

The concept of culture is central to the study of language and literature. It raises the question of how a text relates to the context of its production and reception, and to the respective values, beliefs and attitudes prevalent in them. This concept also plays an important role with regard to the relationship that is established between an individual text and the writing tradition preceding it. The application of this concept to the study of a text should prompt reflection on the extent to which it is the product of a particular cultural and literary context and how it interacts with it.

### Creativity

Creativity plays an important part in the experience of reading and writing. The concept is fundamental to analyse and understand the act of writing, and the role that imagination plays. When applied to the act of

reading, creativity highlights the importance of the reader being able to engage in an imaginative interaction with a text, which generates a range of potential meanings from it, above and beyond established interpretations. Creativity is also related to the notion of originality and to the question of the extent to which it is important or desirable in the production and reception of a text.

### **Communication**

The concept of communication revolves around the question of the relationship that is established between a writer and a reader by means of a text. The extent to which writers facilitate communication through their choices of style and structure may be an aspect to analyse in this exploration. The writer may also have a particular audience in mind, which may mean assumptions have been made about the reader's knowledge or views, making communication with some readers easier than with others. Alternatively, the amount of cooperation that a text demands from a reader for communication to take place, and the readiness of the reader to engage is also important as a topic for discussion. Even with cooperative readers, the meaning of a text is never univocal, which makes the concept of communication a particularly productive, and potentially problematic one in relation to both literary and non-literary texts.

### **Perspective**

A text may offer a multiplicity of perspectives which may, or may not, reflect the views of its author. Readers have also their own perspectives, which they bring to their interaction with the text. This variety of perspectives impacts on the interpretation of a text and, therefore, deserves critical attention and discussion. The fact that the acts of reading and writing happen in a given time and place poses the additional question of how far the contexts of production and reception have influenced and even shaped those perspectives.

### **Transformation**

The study of the connections among texts constitutes the focus of one of the three areas of exploration, namely intertextuality: connecting texts. The complex ways in which texts refer to one another, appropriate elements from each other and transform them to suit a different aesthetic or communicative purpose are evidence of the importance of transformation in the process of creating a text. Additionally, the act of reading is potentially transformative in itself, both for the text and the reader. Different readers may transform a text with their personal interpretation. The text, on the other hand, can have an impact on the reader, which potentially might lead to action and to the transformation of reality.

### **Representation**

The way in which language and literature relate to reality has been the subject of much debate among linguists and literary theorists across time. Statements and manifestos by writers have made claims about this relationship, which range from affirming that literature should represent reality as accurately as possible to claiming art's absolute detachment and freedom from reality and any duty to represent it in the work of art. Irrespective of such a discussion, the concept is a central one to the subject in connection with the way in which form and structure interact with, and relate to, meaning.

## **Principles of course design**

The language A: literature course allows teachers significant freedom in organizing and structuring their courses. The three areas of exploration focus on different approaches to the study of literary texts and do not establish any requirements about the literary forms to be studied. The requirements on the provenance of the works—whether they are studied in the original language they were written in or are studied in translation and whether authors are on the *Prescribed reading list* or freely chosen—must be met throughout the course. There is no prescribed method of how they should be distributed across the areas of exploration.

Additionally, as the syllabus does not bind the areas of exploration to particular assessment components, there is room for individual decisions to be made by students about the works for each of their assessment