

An tSraith Shóisearach do Mhúinteoirí

# Junior **CYCLE** for teachers

**Assessing student learning in Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages**

Resource Booklet

MFL

Nov. – Dec. Cluster

2017



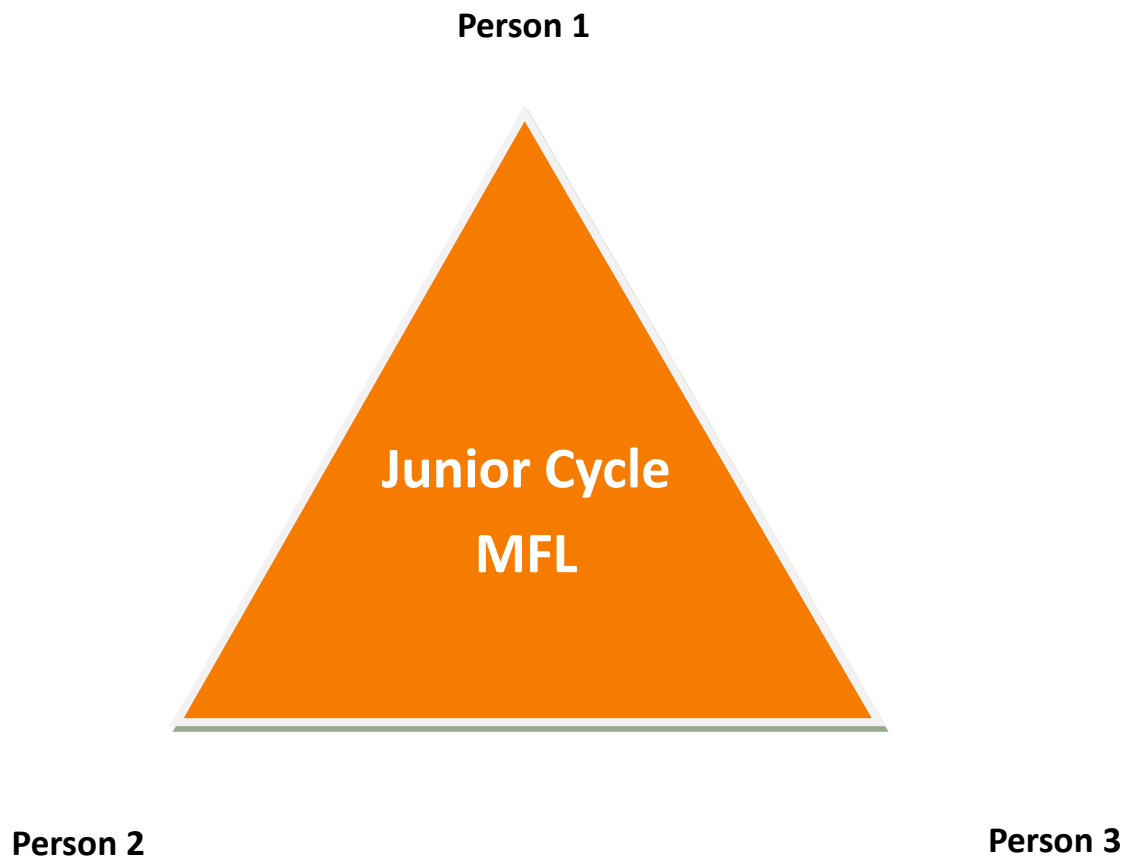
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*Learning another language is not only learning different words for the same things, but learning another way to think about things.*

– Flora Lewis

**Our experience so far: successes and challenges**



## Balancing assessment in the junior cycle MFL classroom

### 1. Read the statements below and consider what all the purple statements have in common and what all the green statements have in common:

This teacher uses oral exams as part of the end of year assessment. These oral exams vary depending on the age and stage of learning. The results are reported as part of the summer exam.

The Final Examination at the end of junior cycle evaluates student learning over the three years of junior cycle. The examination is set and assessed externally by the State Examinations Commission. Results are reported on the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement.

At the end of a unit of learning this teacher sets a test, evaluates the students' answers and keeps a record of the students' achievements. She communicates these evaluations to students and parents at Parent Teacher Meetings.

At the end of First year these German students complete a presentation in the target language as part of their summer assessments. It is assessed and graded by the teacher and results form part of their First year grade.

After a series of grammar lessons on the past tense in Italian this teacher sets a grammar test for students. The tests are then graded by the teacher, who communicates the grades to parents using students' journals.

This French teacher, when returning written assignments to students, asks them to take 5 minutes to review his feedback and correct their own mistakes. They must ask two peers before they can ask the teacher for help with corrections.

This Spanish teacher gives students a list of words to learn for homework. The next day she asks students to peer-assess each other, paying attention to correct pronunciation. At the end of this task the teacher asks each pair for the most difficult word to pronounce. She spends some time during that lesson teaching the students how to pronounce these difficult words.

After a series of lessons on greetings in the target language, this teacher creates an Ed Puzzle video with questions as a homework assignment. When analysing the responses, it becomes apparent that students are confused by formal and informal greetings. She begins the following lesson with a renewed attempt at explaining the concept.

At the end of each term this teacher asks students to evaluate which learning goals they have achieved with the help of Can Do Statements. Students can choose from "On my own / with help / need to revise". Students use the next lesson to clarify any learning goals with the help of their peers and /or their teacher.

During Spanish class students are completing a writing task. The teacher moves around the room monitoring the students' progress. After some time, he stops and asks the students to check with the person sitting to their right how to write the date in Spanish. He then takes feedback from the class and writes the date on the board.

### 2. Test your theory now; which of these scenarios should be "purple" and which should be "green"?

This Spanish teacher assigns several projects throughout the term which ask students to demonstrate agreed key aspects learned. These projects form part of the end-of-term descriptor.

This teacher assigns a project at the end of First year. He uses facts from this project to create a Kahoot quiz for his students when they return to school in September.

This MFL department has agreed that students will submit three pieces of work from their student language portfolio at the end of each academic year as part of their end-of-year assessment.

**3. Working in pairs write down the critical attributes for the purple and the green scenarios:**

**4. Reflect on the assessments you have used in your MFL over the last number of weeks. These prompts may help to inform your thinking:**

- *Were they formative or summative?*
- *How did they move the learning forward?*
- *Did they include different modes of assessment?*
- *How did you assess the various language skills?*

**5. Create a number of formative and summative assessment scenarios for your own MFL classroom, which include all the critical attributes mentioned above:**

## Aspects of formative assessment



## Summary of key aspects of formative assessment

### LEARNING INTENTIONS

#### The WHAT and the WHY

They ensure that you and your students are clear about what the intended learning is. In order to be effective, they need to ...

- Identify what students will be learning
- Explain the reason for the learning
- Be expressed in student-friendly language
- Be revisited throughout the learning process

There is no “right way” to share the learning. They may emerge as a consequence of students and teacher assessing where they currently are, or they may evolve through an inquiry process such as concept attainment.

Learning intentions are linked to learning outcomes. The “core” of the learning outcome includes an action verb and thus provides clarity as to what the students should know, understand or be able to do. This helps when developing learning intentions from learning outcomes.

### SUCCESS CRITERIA

#### How to recognise success

They improve understanding by ensuring that you and your students are clear about what success looks like from the outset. They empower students and encourage them to become independent learners by providing a concrete basis for feedback. They do not have to be different for each lesson/activity. Success criteria:

- allow students to excel at their level of ability and therefore should not limit students
- are student-centred and therefore need to be created in student-friendly language
- can be co-constructed as appropriate - this is developmental

### FORMATIVE FEEDBACK

#### How to move the learning forward

Can be in many forms - written, spoken, etc. It helps students set goals for future learning and helps them become independent learners. Feedback is most effective when it:

- is focused on the quality of the student work
- is related to agreed success criteria
- identifies success and achievement
- indicates suggestions for improvement
- prompts student thinking
- allows time for improvement to take place

Feedback can be in many directions – peer to peer, teacher to peer, self-directed feedback. Should be more work for the student, not more onerous on the teacher

## Summary of key aspects of formative assessment

### EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

Assessment will focus on supporting learning. In order to support learning, we need to know what students are thinking. Research suggests (Mason. J., Watson. A.) that if we know what children are thinking we can find out a lot about how and what they are learning.

To do this we need to ask questions that:

- interest, challenge or engage
- assess prior knowledge and understanding
- mobilise existing understanding to create new understanding
- focus thinking on key concepts
- extend and deepen learners' thinking
- promote learners' thinking about the way they learn
- are planned and related to the learning intentions
- accompanied by wait time
- allows for collaboration before answering
- are carefully graded in difficulty
- encourage learners to explain and justify answers
- allow all students to participate e.g. using mini whiteboards, or questioning each other
- follow up both correct and incorrect answers asked by students

### STUDENTS REFLECTING ON THEIR LEARNING

Whilst most people engage in reflection on a daily basis, much of this occurs in quiet moments by ourselves. Most students are not used to reflecting on their learning in a structured manner. They will need some help to develop skills in reflective thinking and writing. Whilst this skill may be new to them at first, they will become more familiar with it as they progress through junior cycle. Being able to reflect on one's learning and learning how to become a better learner are key elements of the junior cycle key skills. When students learn to reflect on their learning through dialogue, writing or using a computer, they are developing many of these skills.

Through reflection 'in' and 'on' learning students can

- become more aware of the knowledge and skills that they have developed
- identify strengths and areas for development
- develop an action plan for future learning
- gain greater understanding of themselves and how they learn
- take more responsibility for their learning

*Further information on aspects of formative assessment is available in the NCCA Assessment Toolkit*



# Assessing student learning in the MFL Classroom

## Planning Template for this Learning Unit

### First Year MFL

#### Learning Outcomes in focus: (What I want students to know/understand/be able to do in the TL at the end of this unit)

**1.10 Convey simple descriptions, presentations or announcements on familiar topics**

**1.13 Ask and answer questions and exchange ideas, emotions and information on familiar topics** in everyday situations

2.1 Recognise, describe and **use language patterns such as** word order, verbal system, **nouns, adjectives**, spelling and punctuation conventions

**3.4 identify** and explain **some aspects of the target language country/countries in areas such as everyday living**, interpersonal relations, customs and behaviours, social conventions

#### Assessment: (How I know they know)

Students can describe a house/apartment in the target language using a range of nouns and a variety of adjectives

Students can ask and answer questions related to a house

#### Possible learning activities: (What I will do to get them there)

**Introductory placemat activity:** Students create their own list of words /expressions needed for talking about a house (names of rooms, adjectives to describe the rooms, I like...because...). The teacher may then supplement the students' list with additional vocabulary in order to create a glossary of terms/expressions for this unit

**Practice:** Reinforcement of new vocabulary and structures

**Information Gap activity:** In pairs or groups, students match the descriptions to the correct house and find the house that is missing a description. Students then create a description for that house using the information from the written descriptions

**Extension Activity:** Students describe one of the houses orally to another student who attempts to draw it / highlights features on the picture

**Practice:** Aural / Oral revision of questions and answers related to the house through various strategies, such as "Snap" and / or "3 Truths and a Lie"

**Reading activity:** In groups of three, students devise a range of questions you expect to be answered when researching accommodation online. They then research accommodation online using [www.casamundo.de](http://www.casamundo.de) / [www.casamundo.it/](http://www.casamundo.it/) / [www.casamundo.de](http://www.casamundo.de) / [www.casamundo.fr](http://www.casamundo.fr) in the target language

**End of Unit Task:** Students prepare and deliver a short presentation describing a house / apartment they would like to rent in the TL country using a range of nouns and a variety of adjectives. This is followed by questions from students and / or the teacher

*\*Activities recognise the integrated nature and sequence (receptive → productive) of second language acquisition*

#### Resources:

House-themed flash cards: these can be used throughout the unit with descriptions / questions / as matching exercises / for aural and oral reinforcement

Websites advertising accommodation in the TL country

#### Reflection:

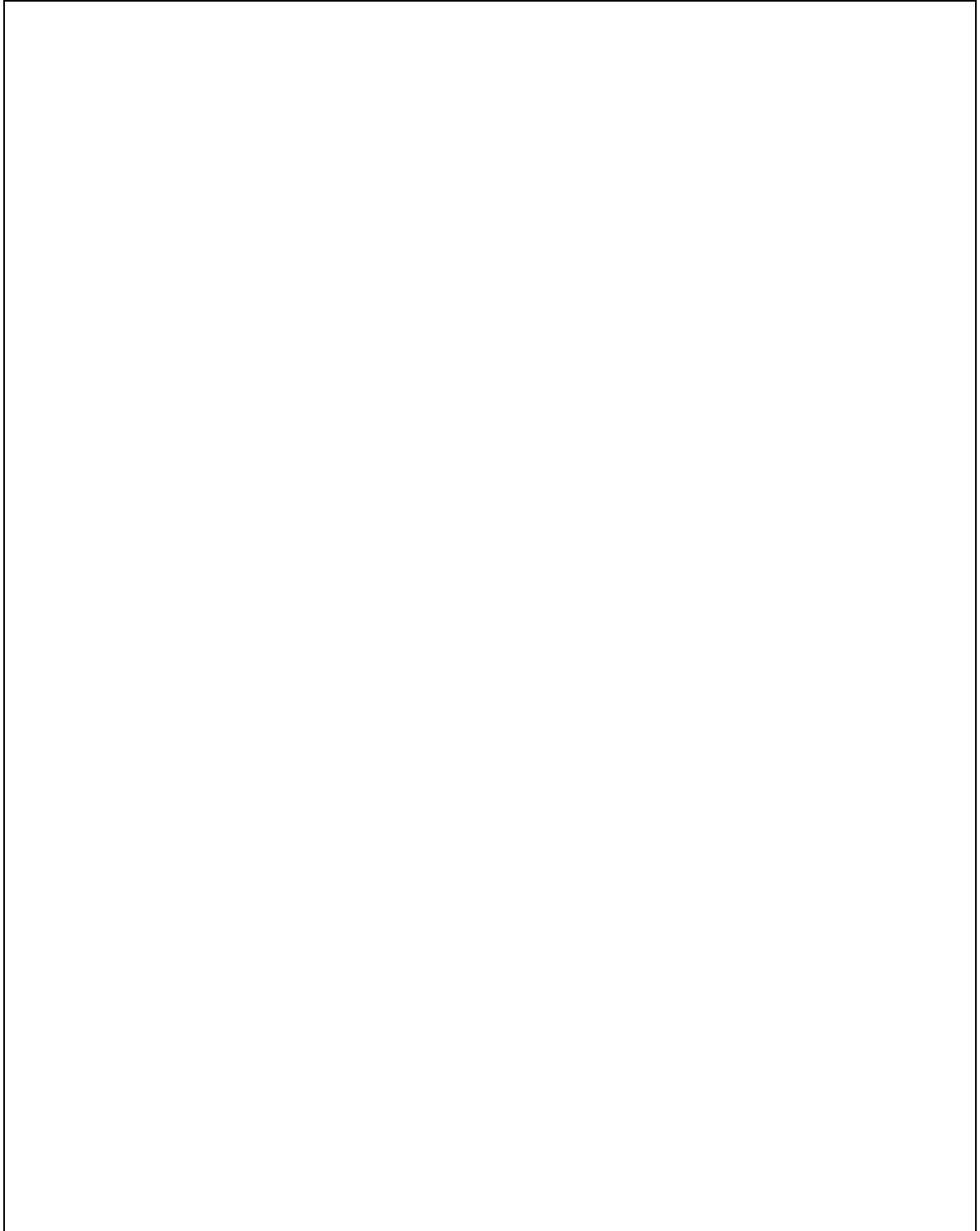
What worked well?

Even better if...

## Through the lens of a student

We are learning to...

- name a range of different rooms and features of a house / apartment
- ask and answer questions about a house / apartment
- describe a house / apartment in the different target language country / countries to our peers
- prepare and deliver a presentation to our peers

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying the lower half of the page. It is intended for students to write or draw their responses to the learning objectives listed above.

## Information Gap Activities



*IHA location vacances*



*Wikimedia commons*



*publicdomainpictures.com*



*Geograph*



*IHA Holiday lettings*



*IHA Holiday lettings*



*IHA Holiday lettings*



*wikimedia comments*

## Information Gap Activities



*PxHere*



*Pixabay.com*



*Wikimedia Commons*



*Wikimedia Commons*



*Pixabay.com*



*IHA.com*



*IHA.com*



*Wikimedia Commons*

## Reflection




*How do the various aspects of formative assessment support learning throughout this unit?*

## Developing the skill of Active Reflection

*Teaching students to reflect... how are we doing?*

Work either individually or with a partner and then discuss how well you have developed your classroom practice in developing students' reflection skills.

Traffic light your responses to the questions below using the code indicated:

In my classroom...	 Always	 Sometimes	 Never
I allow time for students to reflect on their progress at the end of a lesson / lessons.			
I encourage students to think about not only what they have learned but how they learned it.			
I encourage students to plan the next steps in their learning.			
I provide questions and tools to help students reflect on their learning.			
I use language associated with reflection in class, such as, 'let's pause to reflect on what you've just learned'.			
I provide opportunities for students to self-assess as part of the reflective process.			
I allow time for students to reflect on feedback that they receive from me and their peers.			

## Teacher Reflection Template Example – September to Midterm



The following is an example of a reflection template used by a language teacher to reflect after a longer period of learning to inform next steps in planning for teaching, assessment and learning.

Guiding questions:

- Did I combine learning outcomes from different strands to create a learning unit?
- Was there an element of student choice?
- Were all five (5) language skills assessed?
- Was my assessment mainly formative or summative or was it both?

Strand 1	Strand 2	Strand 3
1.2 x 2 1.3 1.6 1.9 x 2 1.12 1.14 1.15 1.19	2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6 2.7	3.1 x 2 3.2 3.10

Learning Outcomes	Students can...	End of unit task
2.5, 3.1, 3.2	...name a range of French / German / Italian / Spanish words we use in English ...name the countries where the TL is spoken ...create a factsheet about one of the TL countries using a range of information	
1.12, 2.3, 2.6	...greet someone, introduce themselves, and thank someone in the TL ...respond appropriately and accurately to greetings in formal / informal situations ...identify their preferred strategy for learning new words	
1.9, 2.2, 3.1	...make the sounds associated with the alphabet of the target language ...pronounce a range of cities and landmarks accurately ...locate a range of famous cities and their landmarks in the TL country	
1.2, 1.9, 2.4	...pronounce words and phrases stressing the correct part of the word ...identify silent letters when listening to words and phrases in the TL ...identify the beginning and end of a word when listening to entire sentences in the TL	
1.2, 1.15, 2.7	...name items in the classroom in the target language ...follow simple instructions in the target language ...use the target language to ask their peers for classroom items, evaluate work using simple phrases, give simple excuses	
1.3, 1.14, 3.10	...use a range of numbers in the TL? ...identify a range of numbers when heard in the TL in isolation and in short sentences ...identify similarities /differences in the way age is expressed in the TL	
1.6, 1.19, 2.1	...name the members of their immediate family in the TL ...describe their family members using a range of adjectives ...present a written piece of their choice describing their family	

# Learning Unit Samples



Learning Outcomes in focus: (What I want students to know / understand / be able to do in the TL at the end of this unit)

Assessment: (How I will know that they know?)

Possible learning activities: (What I will do to get them there?)

*\*Activities recognise the integrated nature and sequence (receptive → productive) of second language acquisition*

Resources:

Reflection:

What worked well?

Even better if...

## Further ideas for developing the skill of reflection

### Learning Log

A learning log is a planned, purposeful, follow-up written response to the learning experience. These reflections can be kept online or in a special journal. They can enable a dialogue between the student and teacher on the learning journey. In some cases, reflections might be shared in a small group or with a partner.

### The purple pen for reflection

If you don't want students to separate their reflections from their day-to-day learning, then you can ask them to use a blue / black pen when they are completing their work and a purple pen to write their reflections on their work. This will make it easier for them and for you to see their reflections in their copybooks.

### Reflection and 'self-talk'

Given our culture, students have difficulty realising that they need to engage in 'self-talk'. To help students develop the internal voice of reflection, they can be asked to do the following:

- Write a letter / text to themselves detailing what they learned from an experience.
- Send themselves a letter of advice, reminding themselves what they can do to improve their learning / work next time they do something.

### Sharing their reflections

The opportunity to share one's reflections is helpful because it helps students develop both the language and practice of reflection. Here are suggestions for helping students develop the capacity for sharing their reflections:

- Sit in a circle. Ask each person to share one reflection about how they learned within the class or small group today.
- Invite students to reflect on their areas of difficulty or concerns and then share problem-solving strategies.
- Invite students to think about a recent mistake or error they made and how they have learned from it.

Many of us grow up thinking of mistakes as bad. To maximise our learning, it is essential to ask: 'How can we get the most from every mistake we make?'

*Assessment Toolkit, NCCA*



## Answer Key - Concept Attainment Activity:

This Spanish teacher assigns a number of projects throughout the term which ask students to demonstrate agreed key aspects learned. These projects form part of the end-of-term descriptor.

This teacher assigns a project at the end of First year. He uses facts from this project to create a Kahoot quiz for his students when they return to school in September.

This MFL department has agreed that students will submit three pieces of work from their student language portfolio at the end of each academic year as part of their end-of-year assessment.

## Concept Attainment

### Rationale:

Concept Attainment is an inductive instructional strategy or model of teaching developed by Jerome Bruner and explained in the book *"A study of thinking"* (1986). Research shows us that the brain is a pattern-seeker. Concept attainment helps to uncover those patterns, pushes the analysis level of critical thinking and helps students to retain the information longer and understand the concept on a deeper level. It encourages students to develop or clarify their understanding of a concept.

### Concepts:

In order to use this strategy, it is essential to have a clear understanding of the concept in question.

*'A concept is anything you can see, feel, touch or taste. The greater the clarity about the concepts around us the more likely we are to understand and communicate with others'*. (Bennett and Rollheiser, *"Beyond Monet"*, 2001: 189)

A concept has four (4) elements:

1. **A name or label** (i.e. past tense, nouns, verbs, love, racism, dog)
2. **Examples/Exemplars:** The model cases should all share one or more characteristic or attribute (i.e. for the concept *dance*, the examples could be *Waltz, Tango, Jive*)
3. **Attributes:** every concept has essential and non-essential attributes
4. **Value Range:** Some attributes are outside our current understanding of the characteristics of concepts (our understanding of colours of apples are red / green / yellow, but maybe there are others that we have never seen?)

### ***Preparation of the lesson:***

1. Select and define a concept
2. Select the attributes
3. Develop positive and negative examples

### ***Teaching the concept takes place in three phases:***

1. Present the data sets accompanied by a focus statement:
  - Data Sets contain YES examples of a concept and NO examples of a concept. The NO examples may or may not have something in common.
  - The Focus statement focuses the learner on what to look at and what not to look at. (i.e. "You will see examples of food. The YES examples have something in common; the NO examples do not. Please think to yourself and do not share your ideas with anyone at this point.")
2. Now the learners share their hypothesis; possibly first with a person beside them and then with the whole group. You may have to find a few more examples to eliminate or clarify a concept at this stage.
3. Now students share their thinking; they may discuss the purpose of the concept or discuss the essential attributes. This phase should be done in groups and can involve other instructional strategies such as Team Analysis, 6 Thinking Hats, Placemat, etc. This is the most important stage of Concept Attainment as it helps the learner clarify the attributes of a concept.

### **Application in the MFL classroom:**

Concept Attainment lends itself to teaching grammar concepts such as tenses, word forms, punctuation conventions as well as concepts such as stereotypes, customs, social conventions.

## Changing approach to assessment

*NB Please consult the Specification for Modern Foreign Languages and the Assessment Guidelines for all information regarding assessment in junior cycle modern foreign languages.*

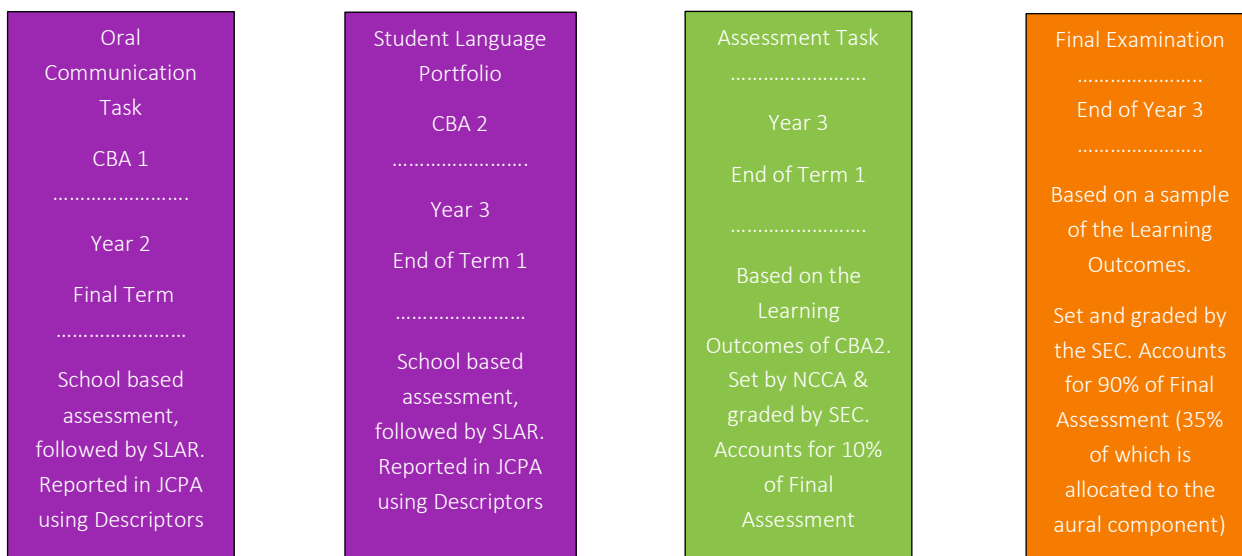
A new dual approach to assessment increases the prominence given to classroom-based assessment and formative assessment: students learn best when teachers provide feedback that helps students to understand how their learning can be improved.

**Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs)** are completed in class time. They should closely resemble what happens on a daily basis in the classroom. They aim to create opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in areas that are difficult to capture in a pen and paper timed exam. For example, the 1<sup>st</sup> CBA is an oral communication task. It offers students the opportunity to focus on an aspect of the target country / countries; or on a simulation of an experience in a target language country; or on a topic or stimulus of interest. Students can communicate their findings through a range of formats.

To support teacher judgement in the CBAs, Features of Quality are set out in the Assessment Guidelines. **Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR)** meetings provide teachers with the opportunity to share and discuss samples of their assessments of student work and build a common understanding about the quality of student learning. Teachers' judgement is recorded for the purpose of the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting and for the school's reporting to parents and students.

**An Assessment Task (AT)** will follow the second CBA. It is a written reflection task completed by students during class time and is sent to the State Examinations Commission along with the final examination for correction. It accounts for 10% of the final grade, the written exam will account for the other 90%. Results of the CBAs and the overall SEC result are recorded on the **Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA)**.

A dual approach to assessment, involving classroom-based assessment across the three years and a final externally-assessed, state-certified examination can enable the appropriate balance between preparing students for examinations and also facilitating creative thinking, engaged learning and better outcomes for students.



## References

Council of Europe (2001). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment. Cambridge University Press. The full text is available on the [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

Department of Education and Skills (DES) (2015). Framework for Junior Cycle 2015. DES. The full text is available on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (2016). Specification for Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages. DES. The full text is available on [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie)

Department of Education and Skills (DES), Inspectorate (2016). Looking at our schools 2016, A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools. The full text is available on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

## Where can I get more information?

[www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie)

This is the website of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) where you will find key documents such as: The specification for Modern Foreign Languages, Guidelines for the Classroom Based Assessment and Assessment Task

[www.juniorcycle.ie](http://www.juniorcycle.ie)

Here you can find the Assessment Toolkit which is designed to support and assist teachers in their work on junior cycle assessment

























[www.jct.ie](http://www.jct.ie)













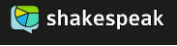









Our aim is to support schools in their implementation of the new Junior Cycle Framework through the provision of appropriate high quality continuing professional development for school leaders and teachers, and the provision of effective teaching and learning resources.



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## Digital resources suggested by and for teachers of MFL

 <p><a href="#">Post-it® Plus</a> (notes taking)</p>	 <p><a href="#">Trading Card Creator</a> (flashcards game)</p>
 <p><a href="#">Pearltrees</a> (virtual resource organiser)</p>	 <p><a href="#">Deutsche Welle</a> (German international broadcasting service that also contains online German lessons)</p>
 <p><a href="#">Storify</a> (Create your social media stories)</p>	 <p><a href="#">TES teach</a> (A platform to create digital lessons)</p>
 <p><a href="#">Popplet</a> (Collaborative mind mapping tool)</p>	 <p><a href="#">Flipboard</a> (News aggregator)</p>
 <p><a href="#">Mindmeister</a> (Collaborative mind mapping)</p>	 <p><a href="#">LibriVox</a> (Free public domain audiobooks)</p>
 <p><a href="#">Google Earth</a> (Earth view)</p>	 <p><a href="#">eTwinning</a> (A community for schools in Europe)</p>
 <p><a href="#">ipadio</a> (Broadcast live via a phone call)</p>	 <p><a href="#">Sway</a> (Create presentations and newsletters)</p>
 <p><a href="#">Flubaroo</a> (A grading tool)</p>	 <p><a href="#">PodOmatic</a> (Podcast platform)</p>
 <p><a href="#">Mindomo</a> (Collaborative mind mapping)</p>	 <p><a href="#">Thinglink</a> (Annotate existing images or videos)</p>
 <p><a href="#">Trivialang</a> (a game app for language learners)</p>	 <p><a href="#">Second Life</a> (virtual world platform)</p>
 <p><a href="#">Tumblr</a> (simple microblogging w. media)</p>	 <p><a href="#">Rhinospike</a> (audio recordings by NSs)</p>
 <p><a href="#">PollDaddy</a> (online poll creation tool, embeddable in WordPress)</p>	 <p><a href="#">PB Works</a> (wiki website creation tool)</p>

 Moodle (course management system or VLE- virtual learning environment)	 Voki (talking through avatars)
 Powerpoint Online (cloud-based presentation tool)	 Twitter (web-based microblogging tool)
 Google Docs (a tool for creating, sharing, storing and collaborating on files)	 Langblog (an audio/videoblog for oral production)
 Photopeach (slide presenting tool turning images into slides)	 Wordle (word cloud creator)
 Voicethread (visual presentation tool + slide presenting)	 Weebly (simple website creation tool)
 BliuBliu (vocabulary, authentic materials)	 PollEverywhere (mobile phone audience polling tool)
 RubiStar (rubric creator)	 Shakespeak (students vote and ask questions with their mobile)
 Lang-8 (native speakers correct your writing)	 goo.gl (url shortener)
 ReadLang (click words to make flashcards)	 Memrise (create and take quizzes)
 Skype (audio-conferencing tool)	 Wheel Decide (Online spinner tool)
 Vocaroo (share voice messages online)	 TuneIn (radio/podcasts)
 Socrative (mobile response quizzier/poller)	 Mentimeter (mobile polling tool)
Your suggestions:	Your suggestions:
Your suggestions:	Your suggestions:

## Tools and Strategies for Differentiation in the MFL Classroom

Graphic organiser	Use of pictures
Quiet location to work	One to one
Note taking strategies	Extended time
Team teaching	Small group instruction
Modelling	Proximity
Strategic groupings	Think pair share
Note-taker	Read aloud
Hands on	Hands on activity/experiment
Adjusted reading level of texts	Project based learning
Choice of response	Reduced workload
Peer support	Use of calculator
Field trips	Discussion
Use of dictionary	Authentic activities
Connecting to prior knowledge	Use the interest of students
Modified content	Guided practice
Independent practice	Individual instruction

**Notes**

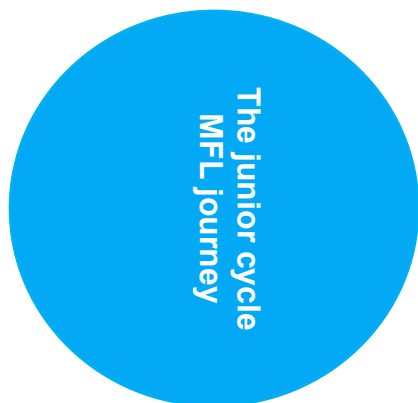
An tSraith Shóisearach do Mhúinteoirí

Junior**CYCLE**  
for teachers

## Mindmap your day!

[www.jct.ie](http://www.jct.ie)

For all queries please contact [info@jct.ie](mailto:info@jct.ie)



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*Creativity is contagious. Pass it on. – Einstein*