

Supporting the 5 Language Skills in MFL



**Developing Students'
Communicative Competence**

START >

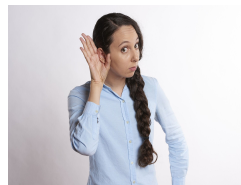
The five language skills for MFL at Junior Cycle



Strategies to support access and challenge in the development of communicative competence.



Introduction



Listening



Reading



Spoken Interaction



Spoken Production



Writing



Please click on the blue icons to access the strategies

What does the Specification Say?

'In learning foreign languages, students are actively engaged in activities and tasks which integrate the **five language skills of listening, reading, spoken production, spoken interaction and writing**. As a result, **they communicate with increasing independence, confidence and creativity**. As learning is a social activity as well as a personal one and as communication is central to language, learning languages offers students ample opportunities to work with others to develop their language skills and achieve appropriate goals.'

(MFL Specification, p. 4)

Click for strategies that support the development of all five language skills



'Junior cycle is inclusive of all students and contributes to equality of opportunity, participation and outcome for all.'

(MFL Specification, p. 3)



Developing Skills in MFL

Pre-Learning Activities



Anticipation Exercises
Scaffold Exercises
Extension Exercises
Carefully planned teacher questions

During-Learning Activities



Cloze Tests
Create Summaries
Tick the boxes
Write down what you see, hear or experience

Post-Learning Activities



Compose Questions
Scaffold Exercises
Pairwork
Questioning



The Skill of Listening- supporting students in MFL



Other strategies to support students to advance their listening skills:



1. **Listening Frames**- can include various learning activities for developing the listening skill. For example, after listening to a segment, students in pairs are asked to predict what they think will happen next, to make connections with prior learning or to retell the action in their own words
2. **An audio-visual stimulus** - an audio visual clip could be played with a transcript. This helps students to associate the written with the spoken word, identify new vocabulary and support pronunciation. Students have autonomy to choose materials that interest them which they can play and replay on their own devices outside of class time
3. **Targeted use of subtitles** - first viewing with subtitles in the Target Language (TL) and then viewing without
4. **Audio Pacing** - allows students to slow the pace of what they are listening to. This increases access to the audio material
5. **Carefully designing questions**- students can both access a piece and be challenged by it. This will enhance students' learning experience while developing their listening skills.

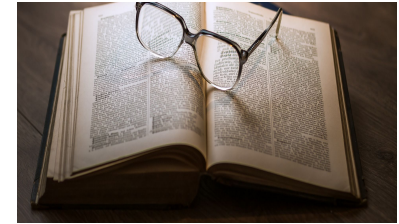


The Skill of Reading- supporting students in MFL



Strategies to support students to advance their reading skills:

1. **Anticipation exercise** - discussing a stimulus such as photograph, image or comic to activate curiosity and make connections
2. **Scanning for meaning** - reading headings, sub-headings only, seeking words similar to English to activate prior learning and predict themes
3. **Strategies to retrieve information** -matching pictures to the text, matching phrases to definitions, match the beginning and end of sentences
4. **Organising information for meaning** - sequencing, prioritising, filling in the gaps, true or false activities
5. **Adapted reading** -students read different versions of the text and feed what they have read into a jigsaw activity
6. **Chunking** - this technique breaks larger pieces of reading down into smaller more manageable bite sized pieces. For more information refer to additional sheet 
7. **Shared reading** - this can be done in pairs where each takes a turn. For more information refer to additional sheet 



The Skill of Spoken Interaction- supporting students in MFL

Strategies to support students to advance their spoken interaction skills:

1. **Flipped Classroom** - students firstly prepare the questions as homework. This strategy allows students to research ahead of the theme being introduced
2. **Interviewing or role-playing**- this affords students the opportunity to creatively interact in the TL, allowing simulation of real-life settings
3. **Drama activities** - allows students to reenact interactions from music (such as rap), radio/TV advertisements and social media content. Mime is a dramatic form that can be used in pairs or groups. Students describe what is being mimed or students have to guess what is being mimed - shopping at the supermarket, getting ready for school and so forth
4. **Group work** - assign roles in spoken interaction group work so that each member has to participate in a meaningful manner for the group to achieve their end-goal.



The Skill of Spoken Interaction- supporting students in MFL

Strategies to support students to advance their spoken interaction skills:

5. **Skype/Zoom in the MFL classroom** - pairing students with their counterparts in the TL community provides the opportunity for real-life communication. eTwinning provides some excellent opportunities for this
6. **Randomiser** - this tool randomly selects names. Students can interact in the TL with different classmates, enhancing socialisation
7. **Physical resources** -TL posters and classroom table charts with TL expressions support spoken interaction in activities such as role plays, interviews and debates
8. **Emoji dashboard** - emoji images can be utilised to facilitate spoken interaction on key learning or as part of a simple story telling narrative. Emojis can be printed or presented in digital form. For example emojis of a family, a house and a dog can support a real-life conversation scenario supporting question formulation, responses and descriptions.



The Skill of Spoken Production

- supporting students in MFL

Strategies to support students to advance their spoken production skills:

1. **Placemat activity** - students work individually and then together to produce questions or discussion points around a communicative situation/context. This facilitates spoken formulation of key vocabulary around the theme being developed in the learning
2. **Think-Pair-Share** - students work in pairs on learning activities. Students reflect individually on key ideas and then practice their spoken production in pairs leading to confident sharing in the target language
3. **Flashcards** - students note key words and prompts in the TL on flashcards to support their spoken production
4. **Pronunciation skills** - share short audio clips on learning that is being covered in class for self-directed pronunciation practice. Students self-assess with a reflection sheet.



The Skill of Spoken Production- supporting students in MFL

Strategies to support students to advance their spoken production skills:

5. **Integrating subtitles** into spoken production - to vary the stimuli to support pronunciation, students can integrate subtitles as an aid to practise

6. **Self-recording** - students use recording tools available via the school virtual learning platform or on their chosen device. Students listen back and self/peer assess or teacher assesses

7. **Scaffolds for spoken production**- students are encouraged to use tools with pronunciation features such as Word Reference, Google Translate, MS Word and Forvo. This may prove helpful in activities where students are planning content for spoken production. Each student can check pronunciation when working in pairs, groups or independently at home.



The Skill of Writing- supporting students in MFL

Writing can be scaffolded in a number of ways. As writing skills develop these scaffolds can be scaled back. Here are some ideas for scaffolding:

1. **A writing frame** - this is a skeleton outline consisting of key words and prompts to develop an idea into a sentence and building to multiple paragraphs
2. A template of **sentence starters and connecting words** could be offered in the TL to develop sentences into a paragraph. Students learn to link more than one paragraph together as they become more confident writers
3. **A word bank**- this is a list of words relevant to the intended learning which aids the student in their writing. Word banks may support students in the early stage of writing in the TL
4. **Modelling writing skills** - defined success criteria are clarified through demonstrating what success looks like. Students assess models in pairs, against the success criteria and use them to further clarify how to proceed in the creation of their own piece of writing
5. **Storyboards**- Students watch audio-visual material and jot down what they hear. In pairs or groups they create a storyboard using what they have heard. Storyboards can be digitally or physically created.



Chunking - Supporting Students in MFL

- Chunking is a strategy that helps students **breakdown difficult text into more manageable chunks**. Dividing content into smaller parts helps students identify keywords and ideas, develops students' **ability to paraphrase**, and makes it easier for students to organise and synthesise information
- Chunking can be used with **challenging texts of any length**, (pages/paragraphs). Students might write down their chunks on a graphic organizer. (Students could also be given different parts of the same text as part of Jigsaw learning)
- As students read, they might circle words that are familiar, **use context clues** to find meaning, **look up unknown words, write synonyms for new words, underline/highlight important elements**, e.g., places/people. Other possible strategies include read aloud/read multiple times
- Chunking the text simply means breaking the text down into smaller parts. *For students with additional needs this could be done by the teacher in advance*
- Students could then rewrite “chunks” in their own words. By the end of the activity, students have completed a paraphrased version of the original text
- The paraphrased ‘chunk’ might be used to **compare with other students** as a Jigsaw activity to see what they ‘chunked’. Students can also develop spoken interaction and production skills in TL as part of this step.



Shared Reading - supporting students in MFL

- Shared reading typically involves the whole class and the **teacher reading an enlarged text**, (e.g., interactive whiteboard) that contains appropriate challenges and supports for students ensuring all students can see the text
- The purpose of the enlarged text is so **students can follow the words as the teacher reads**. Initially the teacher might do much of the reading. However, as students become more familiar with the text they will assume more control
- Activate students' prior knowledge and share the learning intentions and the success criteria with the students
- Encourage students to **make predictions about the text, discuss with students the conventions of various text forms, students might in pairs discuss meanings in texts** relating them to their own experiences
- Students are expected to be **actively engaged** whilst the teacher is reading, following the text and **when confident, joining in and reading with the teacher**
- This links with the Junior Cycle Key Skill of Staying Well - being positive about learning. 'In all strands, students will develop a positive attitude towards language learning as they engage with diversity and reflect on their successes' (MFL Specification p. 10).

