AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS

LEAVING CERTIFICATE

ITALIAN

DRAFT

GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS

LEAVING CERTIFICATE

Aims

1. The **general aim of education** is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual, including aesthetic, creative, critical, cultural, emotional, expressive, intellectual, moral, physical, political, social and spiritual development, for personal and home life, for working life, for living in the community and for leisure.

2. Leaving Certificate programmes are presented within this general aim, with a particular emphasis on the preparation of students for the requirements of further education or training, for employment and for their role as participative enterprising citizens.

3. All Leaving Certificate programmes are to provide continuity and progression from the Junior Certificate programme, with an appropriate balance between personal and social (including moral and spiritual) development, vocational studies and preparation for further education and for adult and working life. The relative weighting given to these features may vary according to the particular programme being taken.

4. Programmes leading to the award of the Leaving Certificate are offered in three forms:
    (i)   Leaving Certificate Programme
    (ii)   Leaving Certificate Applied Programme
    (iii)   Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

5. All Leaving Certificate programmes emphasise the importance of:
    •   self-directed learning and independent thought.
    •   a spirit of inquiry, critical thinking, problem solving, self-reliance, initiative and enterprise.
    •   preparation for further education and for adult and working life.

6. The **Leaving Certificate Programme (LCP)** aims to:
    •   enable students to realise their full potential in terms of their personal, social, intellectual and vocational growth
    •   prepare students for their role as active and participative citizens
    •   prepare students for progression onto further education, training or employment.

It provides students with a broad, balanced education while allowing for some specialisation. Syllabuses are provided in a wide range of subjects. All Leaving Certificate subjects are offered at Ordinary and Higher levels. In addition, Mathematics and Irish are also offered at Foundation level.

Student performance in the Leaving Certificate Programme can be used for purposes of selection into further education, employment, training and higher education.

7. The **Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCAP)** is a discrete two year programme, designed for those students who do not wish to proceed directly to third level education or for those whose needs, aspirations and aptitudes are not adequately catered for by the other Leaving Certificate programmes.

   LCAP is structured around three main elements which are interrelated and interdependent:
   • Vocational Preparation
   • Vocational Education
   • General Education
   It is characterised by educational experiences of an active, practical and student centred nature.

8. The **Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)** aims, in particular, to:
   • foster in students a spirit of enterprise and initiative
   • develop students' interpersonal, vocational and technological skills.

   LCVP students study a minimum of five Leaving Certificate subjects (at Higher, Ordinary or Foundation levels), including Irish and two subjects from specified vocational subject groupings. They are also required to take a recognised course in a Modern European language, other than Irish or English.

   In addition students take three Link Modules which provide a curriculum coherence for the LCVP

Contents

FOREWORD

The Minister for Education has asked the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment to revise the subject syllabuses for the Leaving Certificate programme in the context of the national programme of curriculum reform currently in progress. This process of revision is being implemented on a phased basis. The first phase of syllabus revision consists of six subjects for implementation in schools in September 1995, and for examination in 1997 and subsequent years.

The revision of the Leaving Certificate is being conducted with particular reference to the need

- to provide continuity and progression from the Junior Certificate programme;

- to cater for the diversity of aptitude and achievement among Leaving Certificate students through appropriate courses at both Ordinary and Higher levels and also at Foundation Level in the case of Irish and Mathematics;

- To address the vocational dimension inherent in the various Leaving Certificate subjects;

In association with the syllabuses, **Teacher Guidelines** have been developed, through the NCCA course committees, as an aid to teachers in the implementation of the new courses. These guidelines are intended as both a permanent resource for teachers and a resource for use in the in-career development programme for teachers, sponsored by the Department of Education.

These Guidelines are not prescriptive. They provide suggestions for teachers in relation to teaching practice. Particular attention is paid to aspects of the new syllabus which may not be familiar to teachers, in terms of content or methodology.

The Guidelines are published jointly by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the Department of Education.

In particular the role of JOHN MCCARTHY (NCCA Education Officer for Modern Languages) has been significant in designing and editing the overall structure of the Guidelines for Modern Languages and that of the members of the Senior Cycle Course Committee for Italian in drawing up a compilation of exemplars in Italian designed for use in conjunction with these guidelines.

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines for teaching Italian in the Leaving Certificate programme provide:

- a rationale for the syllabus content and structure (Chapter 1)
- an overview of current principles and good practice in modern language teaching (Chapters 2 and 3)
- suggestions for teaching the syllabus content with pupils of varying abilities (Chapter 4)
- a range of examples for classroom activities within the context of an integrated approach (Chapters 5 and 6)
- suggestions for using literary texts (Chapter 7)
- assessment criteria and descriptions of expected performance at different grades. (Chapter 8)

The guidelines should be viewed as an additional resource and not as a strait-jacket i.e. teachers are free to pick and choose from those suggestions which they feel will be useful to them. It is not recommended that the three components of the syllabus be taught separately but rather that workplans be based on linking together all three areas of content. Chapters 5 and 6 are provided by way of suggestion as to how a programme of work involving an integrated approach to (a) the syllabus content and (b) a progression in the development of the learners' skills could be planned. Where such a detailed scheme is not possible or not considered desirable there will still be a need to plan a programme of work that is systematic, sequential and coherent and the suggestions offered in these guidelines are aimed at facilitating that process.

A document containing exemplars in Italian of the various activities described in these guidelines has been drawn up by members of the Senior Cycle Course Committee for Italian.

1. The Syllabus

Summary: 1.1 Structure

1.2 Basic Communicative Proficiency

1.3 Language Awareness

1.4 Cultural Awareness

1.1 Structure

The Leaving Certificate syllabus for Italian contains the following three broad components:

Basic Communicative Proficiency

Language Awareness

Cultural Awareness

This syllabus structure aims to lead every pupil towards four basic outcomes as a result of the experience of modern language learning in the classroom:

(a) a communicative ability in Italian

(b) an awareness about language and communication

(c) an awareness of the culture associated with the Italian language

(d) some idea of how to go about learning a foreign language

The structure of the syllabus arises from its aims in the following way:

Aims:

1.. COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS	2. HOW LANGUAGE WORKS 3. LANGUAGE LEARNING	4. CULTURAL, SOCIAL POLITICAL DIVERSITY
⇩	⇩	⇩

Structure:

BASIC COMMUNICATIVE PROFICIENCY	LANGUAGE AWARENESS	CULTURAL AWARENESS
⇩	⇩	⇩

Content:

• CLASSROOM • EVERYDAY • MEDIA • LEISURE • STUDY • CAREER	• LANGUAGE ISSUES • LANGUAGE LEARNING • GRAMMAR	• CULTURAL DIVERSITY • ISSUES TRANSCENDING CULTURAL DIVISIONS

An integrated approach to the three broad components of the syllabus is recommended, i.e., classroom activities should, where possible, involve more than one of the three areas, e.g. the choice of certain authentic materials might provide the focus for working on certain aspects of any two or all three components. Many of the activities listed in the **Language Awareness** section will help learners to develop the more global skills necessary to perform activities outlined under **Basic Communicative Proficiency**. Activities described under **Cultural Awareness** will allow learners to extend many topics listed under Basic Communicative Proficiency by drawing comparisons, giving examples, describing differences in the way of life of different communities etc. Derailed suggestions for implementing an integrated approach are outlined in Chapter 6.

The syllabus content is designed in units of **General Activities/Themes**, with **Performance Targets** designed to help teachers and learners to work out schemes of work and to ensure learners are clear about what is expected of them in relation to each General Activity/Theme. Some of the communicative and linguistic skills including the grammatical knowledge that students will need for the realisation of the Performance Targets are elucidated in terms of **Linguistic Skills - Structures and Grammar**. The examples given in the syllabus provide suggestions for areas to focus upon in the preparation stage in which learners could work on vocabulary and grammatical structures that will be needed in the realisation of the Performance Targets for communicative purposes.

The three components of the syllabus are now described in greater detail.

1.2 Basic Communicative Proficiency

(a) Using the target language in the classroom

The first aim of the syllabus is to foster in learners the communicative skills to enable them to communicate effectively in the target language. There is broad agreement that learners need

opportunities to engage in communication based on an exchange of information. Having learners engage in a variety of tasks which encourage them to negotiate meaning when communication problems arise is deemed essential. Emphasis is placed on what the learner should be able to do in the target language. This section addresses the immediate needs of the learner e.g. in the classroom:

- **requesting permission to do something**
- **asking for clarification**
- **making excuses, etc**

as well as his/her potential needs outside the classroom e.g.

- **buying goods and services**
- **dealing with emergencies**
- **coping with travel and transport**

The Leaving Certificate syllabus is to be seen as including all the basic transactional (e.g. **passing on messages**) and interactional (e.g. **meeting and getting to know people and maintaining social relations**) skills specified at Junior Certificate level. The Leaving Certificate syllabus additionally emphasises such functions as negotiating and includes activities aimed at developing learners' discourse competence e.g.

- **Initiating a conversation**
- **Terminating a conversation**
- **Managing a conversation**

(b)   Communicative Methodology

Since priority is attached to communication in this section of the syllabus - understanding, negotiating, expressing meaning - the approach to methodology   should be a communicative one. Learners should be encouraged to use the language for communicative purposes. Real opportunities for communication, where there exists an information or opinion gap, can occur in the classroom. Where possible Italian should be the language of the classroom e.g. asking students why they have arrived late, haven't done their homework, clarifying instructions, evaluating and correcting pupils' performance and for purposes of disciplinary interventions. When Italian is the normal means of communication learners are enabled to see that the

language is not only the object of study but also a medium of real communication.

(c)   Types of Tasks

In order to learn to use the language spontaneously learners also need frequent opportunities to work with each other on suitable tasks that involve a genuine exchange of information.

The following points have been made regarding the effectiveness of different task types

1.   Two way tasks, since they make the exchange of meaning obligatory produce more negotiation of meaning than one-way tasks.

2.   Planned tasks that require learners to prepare in advance encourage more negotiation than unplanned tasks.

3.   Closed tasks which require a definite ending/resolution produce more negotiation than open tasks.

4.   Convergent tasks, requiring the participants to agree on a solution promote more negotiation than divergent tasks, where different views are accepted.

1.3   Language Awareness

The Language Awareness section of the syllabus contains activities and themes designed to

{i}   stimulate learners' interest in language issues;

{ii}   provide learners with skills and learning strategies to help them be more effective language learners and

{iii}   provide a framework for the teaching and acquisition of grammatical knowledge within a broadly communicative approach.

{i}   Stimulating Learners' Interest in Language Issues

The first general activity/theme, **Learning about language from target language material**, is aimed at stimulating learners' interest in language issues and enthusiasm for language learning. Areas in which awareness of language can usefully be fostered within pupils through the development of insights are:

- language as communication
- language growth and change
- language variety

- creative use of language {including some features of literary language)
- language and culture
- how languages affect each other e.g. loan words,

Selection of texts dealing with language-related themes and learning activities based on such language - related themes can also enhance learners' intellectual development and awareness of other cultures. Once the learners have worked on the linguistic and information content of a text they can then be encouraged to transfer this information to productive skills.

Learning activities based on such language-related themes can also enhance learners' intellectual development and awareness of other cultures.

(ii)   **Equipping Learners with Skills and Strategies**

In the formal learning context of the classroom students can be more effective language learners if they understand something about language learning and take some responsibility for their own learning. In this way learners can develop positive attitudes towards language learning and become increasingly independent in their work. Language Awareness can also contribute to learner autonomy and enhance learners chances of success by equipping them with the skills to find their own way. While recognising that it is helpful to teachers and learners to have a defined content syllabus it is accepted that it would be impossible to include in the syllabus all the words and structures that learners will meet when listening to or reading authentic material in the target language. Learners will therefore need to develop communication strategies to cope successfully with words and structures they have not previously met. Learners need to develop coping strategies such as making use of context and background information to compensate for inadequate linguistic resources. They should be encouraged to identify and solve learning problems and to assess their own performance and progress. Research into successful language learning strategies show that "good learners" learn to:

(a)   **organise information about language**

One way of promoting this organisational ability is to develop in learners related skills such as how a dictionary might be used:

Raising the learners awareness of what to expect in a text by encouraging them to

(b)   form and test hypotheses about language

can improve comprehension skills

Learners might be helped to

©   develop strategies for making sense of the target language,

particularly in the case of longer texts

Making Use of Linguistic Knowledge

It is generally accepted that the role of the first language in second language acquisition can be a very beneficial and positive one. One example of this is the way in which the general meaning or a foreign language text can often be understood by people with little or no knowledge of the language in question. Similarly useful strategies are outlined in other Performance Targets e.g.

❖   Making meaningful target language sentences out of jumbled target language words/phrases/clauses

❖   Making short pieces of meaningful and coherent target language text out of jumbled target language sentences

❖   Working out the implicit inferences of statements made in spoken/written target language text

❖   Describing and commenting on any ways in which you have made your own personal contribution to the process of learning the target language

The use in particular of authentic materials will mean that learners will inevitably be faced with linguistic elements they have not previously encountered. Rather than being daunted by such materials learners should be encouraged to develop techniques for dealing with such texts. Among the strategies that will help learners to understand texts containing new elements are the following:

(a)   **ignoring words which are not needed for a successful completion of the task set**: many texts contain words which are not essential for an understanding of the main points of the text

(b)   **using the visual and verbal context**: the layout, title, related pictures etc. can give the skilled reader many clues about the purpose and content of a text. Pupils can also be taught how to use tone, attitude, information of speakers to help them to infer meaning

(c)   **making use of grammatical markers and categories**, learners can also infer meaning by being able to identify lexical items as verbs, nouns, adjectives etc and by being able to recognise plural forms, verb tenses, word order etc. e.g.

(d)   **making use of world knowledge and cultural knowledge**, learners should be taught to use their knowledge of regularities in the real world (as in the following example) to anticipate what people may say or write about e.g. the order in which events are likely to have happened etc. Often it is enough to follow closely the development of the action in order to overcome most of the lexical difficulties. Unknown words are also often explained further on in the text or a synonym is given. Cultural knowledge such as approximate prices, times, sizes etc can help learners understanding recordings etc.

(e)   **using common patterns between mother tongue and the target language**, learners can make use of patterns - there are many words in another language which can be understood with the application of a few simple rules relating to e.g. endings, prefixes, plurals, tenses etc.

(f)   **using cognates and near cognates**, pupils can guess intelligently the meaning of words in the target language on the basis of cognates of equal or almost equal graphic form and with the same meaning; analogies with a small graphic difference (omission, addition, substitution of letters); analogies which are easily recognised in spite of a different spelling.

A number of verbal strategies which will help learners to compensate for deficiencies in vocabulary and structures can also be easily learned e.g.

- using a word which refers to a similar item, - paraphrase
- description of physical properties   –   reference to the function of e.g, an object
- requests for help

The availability of a range of strategies such as these and flexibility in their use represent an important advantage for language learners. All language learners make use of communication strategies.

(iii)   The third dimension of the Language Awareness component of the syllabus i.e. teaching and acquiring grammatical knowledge which also relates to using linguistic knowledge is dealt with separately under the heading **The Role of Grammar**.

1.4   Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness is an essential aspect of successful language learning. Consequently the third component of the syllabus is aimed at developing in learners an awareness of the culture of the target language community. Culture in the context of the syllabus concerns in particular the way of life of the target language society but also the diversity of its cultural heritage (literature, visual arts, music etc).

The communicative objectives of the syllabus aim to equip learners with a communicative capacity to converse with speakers of the target language and to   facilitate their movement in the target language community. Implicit in the cultural aims of the syllabus is the promotion of the intellectual and social development of learners whose perceptions and insights into the other culture should not remain unchanged and superficial.

The cultural awareness component provides a means of implementing these aims of the syllabus through performance targets based on a comparative methodology: e.g.

Describing the similarities and contrasts between normal everyday life in Ireland and normal everyday life in one of the communities associated with the target language with particular reference to, for example: where people live, etc.

Learners are encouraged to go beyond a merely superficial appraisal of the other culture i.e. **Critically examining national stereotypes**.

The implicit methodological approach aims at providing learners with background information and promoting acceptance and tolerance of cultural differences. Critical appraisal, where appropriate, can also make an important contribution to the development of cultural awareness. This component also provides opportunities for learners to get involved in project work based on cultural themes.

(a)   Methodology

Learners' cultural awareness can be developed in a number of ways as specified in the Performance Targets. The use of authentic materials including literary texts, can promote awareness of the way of life of the country in a direct way and enable learners to deepen their insights into both the other country and their own. Such materials often contain surveys etc. conducted in the other language community. Learners might use this information to carry out their own surveys to describe similarities and contrasts between Ireland and the other country.

(b)   Cultural Themes

Initially, the students' awareness of the other culture could be developed in relation to familiar contexts such as the family, home, meals, birthdays, holidays, spare time activities and familiar "service" contexts such as timetables, information services, opening and closing times and in familiar contexts within the social system such as schooling and housing. The range of contexts within which their cultural awareness is developed can be progressively extended to include more abstract themes such as the values and attitudes of the other culture e.g. the role of the family, individualism and nationalism, politics etc.

A judicious choice of situations for role play activities embracing a wide range of contexts will also help learners to develop an awareness of the need for appropriateness of language to situation including the purposeful use of social conventions in the other culture, such as forms of address, symbols of relationship (hand shakes, kissing) and polite formulae.

The selection of texts such as the following can, in conjunction with appropriate activities, promote cultural awareness.

(b)   Sociolinguistic Awareness

The sociocultural dimension of communicative competence requires that learners should also acquire a knowledge of linguistic conventions for using the target language. They should develop an awareness of language forms and registers appropriate to purpose and context in familiar and informal situations and in less familiar and more formal situations. Many of the Performance Targets listed in the Language Awareness component of the syllabus are specifically designed to promote such sociolinguistic awareness in learners. Detailed suggestions for incorporating these areas of the syllabus into everyday classroom activities are outlined in Chapters 5 and 6 of these guidelines.

2. Providing for Different Aspects of Learning

2.1   Introduction

The approach to second language teaching based on communicative methodology introduced through the 1980's, while successful in many respects, is now seen to have had its shortcomings. In particular the question of the relationship between communication, accuracy and creativity is being raised. Ideally the teaching and learning approach should enable the pupils to use the language purposefully, appropriately, creatively and accurately. While progress has been made in relation to fluency and ability to use the language in a range of situations lack of accuracy and creativity have been cited as a cause of concern. These concerns have put the role of grammar back on the agenda arising from the belief that some form of grammar control based on implicit or explicit knowledge is necessary for creativity and accuracy in the use of language. This raises the questions of what 'grammar' to teach and how to teach it. It is necessary firstly to consider the different ways in which language can be learned.

2.2   Language Acquisition and Language Learning

Language learning can come about in a number of ways. In demonstrating the complexity of the processes involved in learning a second language a distinction is made between the acquisition process and the formal learning process.

The Acquisition Process

The acquisition process refers to the largely subconscious process by which we acquire our first language or another language naturally as a result of attempts to use the language.

The Formal Learning Process

In the formal learning process learners become consciously aware of the rules of the target language and the rules for using the language through conscious learning strategies such as studying, comparing, analysing, practising etc.

Effective language learning depends on these two processes being taken into account and the teaching approach being adapted accordingly. For spontaneous language use involving such characteristics as:

- unpredictability
- choice
- information gap, opinion gap,
- integration of skills etc,

Learners will be mostly dependent on that which has been acquired or internalised. This is not to say that explicit knowledge about the target language does not play an important role. Such knowledge can help learners particularly in non-spontaneous communication e.g. in grammar-focused exercises, in reading and writing and in speaking where there is time for preparation. Whether conscious learning of grammar helps learners internalise knowledge of the system of rules required for spontaneous communication in spoken language is a subject of much debate. However, activities, where they are required to use consciously acquired knowledge of the target language in situations involving choice and unpredictability, can help them to extend their range of application of rules and use language creatively.

2.3   A Balanced Approach

Second language learning in the formal context of the classroom necessitates a judicious mixture of activities aimed at providing learners with knowledge about the target language and activities involving use of the language for communicative purposes. The prime concern will be the development of global skills for communication. A balanced approach to methodology will endeavour to combine both an emphasis on conscious learning and a communicative orientation. If learners are required to engage exclusively in communicative activities based on language use they may not acquire knowledge of the language inferentially that would allow them to use language creatively in new situations. Likewise, learners may not be able to

make use of their formally learnt knowledge and skills unless they have been required to use language to create their own meanings in genuinely communicative situations.

2.4   Sequencing of Activities

Learning activities can be sequenced so as to coordinate both conscious learning and learning through using the language in a systematic way. Whether fluency should be promoted before accuracy, or after, or at the same time is an interesting question.   While the communicative approach has tended to focus on fluency first with a gradual refinement of accuracy over time the reverse strategy advocates accurate production from the start, building up to a more fluent use of language. Since answers as to which approach is more successful overall are not abundantly available an approach alternating systematically between the two may be the wisest course. An appropriate balance could be based on a continuum involving activities and exercises designed to develop skills and strategies concerned with the building up of knowledge and skills leading to communicative language use. Progression can be perceived in terms of a continuum containing activities targeted at both kinds of learning. Activities at the beginning of the continuum, aimed at the conscious learning process, may be viewed as laying a foundation for communicative performance or being an investment in an underlying linguistic competence. Activities at this end of the continuum are aimed at the components or sub-competencies that underpin communicative competence including the structures and vocabulary necessary for communication. Activities involving communicative language use at the other end of the continuum can be designed to have a communicative "pull" effect on this underlying linguistic competence through fluency-oriented tasks i.e. learners can be required to express themselves accurately and creatively by using what they have learned consciously at an earlier phase. Activities aimed at both kinds of learning might be seen in the following terms:

pre-communicative (e.g. practising vocabulary etc.)   →   authentic communication

planned discourse (limited to a number of functions)   →   unplanned discourse

form focused (e.g. focus on specific grammatical points)   →   fluency focused

contrivance (e.g. learners required to produce certain forms) → negotiation of meaning

2.5   Deep-end Strategies

Initial activities may of course often be located at the fluency-oriented end of the continuum and be followed by activities focusing on grammar etc. Putting learners

in at the deep-end (i.e. before they have worked on the vocabulary or grammatical features they are likely to encounter in a given text) can prepare them to cope with unpredictability, an essential feature of communication. The traditional approach of presenting a new structure, practising it and finally having the learners attempt to apply it to a communicative activity can be reversed. It is also possible to start with a communicative activity and then present the necessary language that pupils need, practise this and then return to the communicative activity.

The performance targets listed in the Basic Communicative Proficiency section of the syllabus are, in the main, directed at communicative activities and language learning through language use. Many of the activities listed in the Language Awareness component are aimed at equipping pupils with learning strategies to promote learner autonomy and equip learners with lexico-grammatical knowledge as well as other aspects of communicative competence.

2.6 The Role of Speaking and Writing Activities

The following characterisation of language learning is designed to describe the ways in which the learners may actively engage in the learning process.

Learners start with

an objective or a task

They encounter and interact with

written or spoken texts

chosen by the teacher/themselves.

They come to an

awareness of pattern

as they involve a range of

comprehension strategies:

context clues, non-verbal clues, experience of the world.

In fulfilling their task or objective they acquire a

> **provisional understanding of how the language works**.

Over time they are then involved by their own motivation and/or through language learning experiences provided by their teacher{s) in

> **testing and trialling their understanding of patterns**

From these patterns they formulate and hypothesise

> **provisional language rules**.

With further trialling and exposure to wider contexts they

> **amend and refine the hypothesised rule**

(Source: King, L and P. Boaks (eds) 1994 Grammar   A conference report. CILT:

If this characterisation reflects the way learners develop competence is very important that the organisation of learning activities provides ample opportunity for speaking and writing activities since output is an important part of the learning process. Such activities are considered to aid learning in a number of possible ways including the following:

- by providing an opportunity for meaningful practice -learners learn to write by writing and to speak by speaking
- by providing learners with a way of testing out the hypotheses that they have been forming about the target language
- by generating responses e.g. corrections etc. which can provide learners with information about the comprehensibility or well-formedness of their utterances
- by encouraging learners to pay attention to grammatical accuracy so as to make their speech and writing more 'target-like' and intelligible.

Therefore, while some learners may have very limited potential needs in relation to writing for example, they should nonetheless be encouraged to engage in the type of writing activities that fulfils these functions.

2.7   Activities that Promote Linguistic Progression

Since learners appear to learn "naturally" even in the classroom by following their own route it is essential that their active participation be facilitated as far as possible. Activities having the following characteristics may provide the context for extending communicative and grammatical competence.

Activities which:

- encourage awareness of pattern
- draw attention to form/meaning relationships
- encourage learners to apply newly acquired language independently in defined contexts
- enable learners to try out new language in fresh contexts
- provide learners with opportunities to formulate provisional rules
- encourage learners to exercise choice in the language they use
- allow learners to refine provisional rules and draw conclusions
- require learners to use complex sentences linked by connectives
- invite learners to give sustained accounts.

(Source: King." L, and g. Boaks, (eds), Grammar.t A conference report. 1994 CILT)

3.   The Role of Grammar

3.1   Introduction

A communicative approach does not imply that the teaching of grammar is of secondary importance or that fluency should be sought at the expense of accuracy. If the learners are to be able to find their own way, and process the input encountered in authentic texts they will need an understanding of the system of words and rules that underlies the language they are learning. It is also important to inculcate habits of accuracy in pupils alongside the confidence to speak/write fluently.

The General Activity 11.5 in particular requires learners to engage in activities designed to develop their grammatical knowledge and skills:

Consulting reference materials (e.g. dictionaries and grammars) relating to the vocabulary and grammar of the target language

Performance Targets:

• Using vocabulary correctly and appropriately with the help of dictionaries.
• Learning to cope with simple grammatical terminology relating to the target language.
• Using target language forms correctly on the basis of explanations in grammars written in English, Irish or in the target language.

3.2   Grammar within a Communicative Approach

(a)   Current approaches to grammar teaching point to the need to locate it within the communicative function. Understanding the rules of grammar should not be an end in itself. Learners should be helped to recognise the communicative value of grammatical structures. Grammatical structure appears to develop in learners' speech in response to communicative need i.e. learners acquire a form and the ability to use it productively when it assumes a critical role for the learner in communicating essential information.

(b)   Formal and extensive grammar presentations should be restricted. Exercises that require practice of mechanical drills in which students have no choice in their answers are of limited utility. More effective learning may result from exercises where the context requires students to choose between alternative responses. Making the correct choice should arise from comprehension of the text rather than purely displaying knowledge of the grammatical rule.

3.3   Pupils also learn best when what has to be learnt is contextualised. In authentic materials language is presented in context with a function beyond mere demonstration of a grammatical point. Teachers might utilise authentic recordings and other texts more extensively in the teaching of grammar.

3.4   Teaching grammar

Current approaches to grammar teaching are based on the realisation that the learner possesses his/her own inbuilt system and that some subconscious processes are impervious to outside manipulation. Studies of second language acquisition suggest that a consciousness-raising approach to grammar which requires learners, either deductively or inductively, to become aware of features of the target language may help them to acquire an explicit knowledge of the target language grammar, which may, eventually, feed into the acquisition process.

Where it is found necessary to conduct these activities in English, Italian could be gradually introduced for further explanation. To facilitate this learners should be helped to familiarize themselves with the linguistic conventions and expressions that can be used for this purpose.

3.5   Inductive approaches

An inductive approach encourages students to discover for themselves the underlying patterns, structures etc. of the target language. This could be based on deliberately organised contrasting examples of that structure, e.g. the perfect and imperfect tenses.   Different colour marker pens can be used to highlight various grammatical aspects of the input (e.g. masculine/feminine forms). If learners are required to exercise intellectual effort by forming and testing hypotheses about a targeted feature of the linguistic system this may result in greater retention.

3.6   Deductive approaches

In a **deductive approach** students are given an explanation of the grammatical pattern or structure in question with some examples. In both approaches follow-up exercises can test in various ways the students' comprehension of the pattern in question. For example, in a cloze test students might have to decide which tense, mood or verb is correct in the given context. The test items should be different instances from the examples so that the students' ability to transfer what they have learned to new (but parallel situations) is being tested. The active, rather than passive, participation of the students is very important.

3.7   Error tolerance and correction

Learners' errors are considered to be an integral part of the language learning process from which we can gain very significant insights. It has been suggested that first and second language learners make errors in order to test out certain hypotheses about the nature of the language they are learning. Errors may often be the result of learners' generalisations about features of the target language on the basis of a number of possible sources of knowledge. This may be based on knowledge of language including the target language, mother tongue, other languages, the communicative functions of language and world knowledge.

3.8   The teacher can play an important role in [his whole process by providing feedback for learners on the basis of their performance. Positive feedback and motivation through praise are considered to be much more effective than negative feedback in changing pupil behaviour. It is important nor to place undue emphasis on error correction. Fluency and accuracy are, at the same rime, essential features of communication. Therefore a balanced approach is called for.

3.9   Error tolerance should be based on a recognition of the priority of message transfer - generally errors should not be corrected immediately unless they lead to a breakdown of communication. Errors noted in the course of learners' speech and/or writing could be the focus of whole class analysis at a later period. Self correction also encourages learner independence. One way of developing self correction strategies in learners could be through the underlining of grammatical errors for example and requiring the learner to correct this autonomously.

4.   Mixed-Ability Teaching

Summary: 4.1   Introduction

4.2   Differentiated Tasks

4.3   Differentiated Texts

4.4   Differentiated Levels

4.1   The reality of most classrooms is that they contain students of varying ability. To cater for this reality it may be necessary to adopt a differentiated approach to teaching. A number of strategies is possible e.g.

- Differentiation through classroom organisation
- Differentiation through task
- Differentiation through materials.

4.2   Differentiated Tasks

Group-work and pair-work in particular allow for different outcomes which is vital in mixed-ability classes. Students of similar abilities and aptitudes could be allocated tasks to work on in pairs or groups. This would allow them to work at their own pace. Another pair or group of students could work simultaneously on another related task which might be a sub-component or a high-order skill. Members of pairs or groups might then be interchanged for purposes of explaining difficulties to others. Pairs or groups could also pool information through whole class activities.

The setting of open-ended tasks allows each learner to respond according to his or her ability while promoting a sense of challenge and achievement. It is also possible to devise tasks differentiated on the basis of difficulty. Thus in responding to an aural or written stimulus, some learners might be required only to extract global and clearly sequenced information through multiple choice questions. More able learners might be set more demanding goals such as selecting specific details involving the extraction of implicit information or identifying how communicative function is achieved through linguistic or stylistic devices e.g. how tone, attitude etc is expressed.

While weaker learners might be required to identify surface meaning only, others could be asked to interpret texts and separate literal meaning from implied meaning. Transferring information

into specific headings in a chart or answering true or false questions can be considered less complex tasks than, say, summarising the contents of a text or drawing comparisons between two texts.

4.3 Differentiated Texts

Differentiation could also be based on quantity and quality of texts. In relation to teaching and learning materials these might have to be adapted in some cases for less able learners. More able learners will probably be better able to cope with longer texts which may be based on less familiar or abstract topics while texts with built-in visual supports may be sui{able for slower learners.

4.4 Differentiated Levels

The model based on an integrated approach to all three components of the syllabus suggested in the next section of these guidelines describes activities in relation to the same theme at three different levels of difficulty. While the syllabus framework is common to both Higher and Ordinary levels and designed to cater for the full range of pupil ability in the senior cycle, the reality of the classroom is that some pupils will be more capable than others of performing the various tasks outlined in the Performance Targets. Thus while all pupils should be capable of engaging in some activities related to the various themes some pupils will be capable of pursuing these to a more demanding level e.g. extracting information from more complex texts or speaking and/or writing about a particular topic using a more extensive vocabulary and range of structures and concepts.

5. An Integrated Approach

Summary: 5.1   Introduction

5.2   Planning a Programme of Work

5.3   Example of a Workplan

5.4   Suggestions for an Integrated Approach

5.1   Introduction

As pointed out above it is not recommended that the three components of the syllabus be taught separately. An integrated approach across the three components of the syllabus can be implemented by basing a scheme of work on a number of themes/activities where obvious links can be established. One such possibility, for example, involves the following areas:

Learning about language from target language material; (111, 1)
Talking and writing about your experience of the target language; (11, 4) and
Asking what language you speak/stating what languages you speak (1,1).

In such an approach learners could be encouraged to use various performance targets to abstract the main points from a spoken or written target language text (11,2) and   learn about aspects of language as a social, regional or educational issue (11,1) in the target language community. In this way they would become aware of where the target language is spoken, of other languages spoken in the target language community, and of the importance of language for cultural identity etc. In the course of this input phase, mainly involving listening and reading, learners could build up their vocabulary and expressions related to the theme of language. The next phase would be a productive phase involving learners talking and writing about their experience of the target language.

Other themes that could facilitate an integrated approach across all three components are work, school, leisure activities, goods and services, travel and transport etc.

5.2   Planning a Programme of Work

A well-ordered and adaptable scheme of work should be based on precise objectives both within and between lessons. It is important that learners are clear about what they may expect to learn during the year and what the purpose of the current lesson is.

Before beginning the year's work, it is advisable to study the complete syllabus in order to get an idea of the general content and then choose units which will allow pupils to sample aspects of the entire range of content. Pupils could be invited to indicate their preference for particular performance targets to work on the various Activities/Themes.

5.3   Example of a Workplan

A General Activity/Theme could provide the basis for an integrated approach over a number of lessons with clearly projected outcomes in relation to all four skills. The following example relates to the topic of work/studies and is designed on the basis of three consecutive stages progressing gradually from mainly receptive skills to speaking and writing skills. Stages one and two involve activities that should be within the ability range of most senior cycle pupils, while stage three is more demanding and aimed at those pupils capable of coping with this topic at a more abstract level.

5.4   Suggestions for an Integrated Approach

The following is an example of an extended workplan based on an integrated approach in three stages.

Features

- Integrated approach linking units from all three components of the syllabus i.e. cultural awareness, language awareness and basic communicative proficiency
- Short and long term objectives progression in relation to skills (receptive,
  → productive) and difficulty levels
- Gradual elaboration of theme/topic (concrete → abstract).

Sample framework of a work plan based on integration of various themes, activities in three stages.

Topic:

Studies/Work

Stage 1

Syllabus Area:	Cultural Awareness
Main Skills:	Reading, Listening
General Theme/Activity:	Learning in the target language about the present-day culture associated with the target language (111,1)
	Exploring meaning (11,2)

Stage 2

Syllabus Area:	Basic Communicative Proficiency
Main Skill:	Speaking
General Theme/Activity:	Managing a Conversation (1,9)
	Meeting and getting to know people and maintaining social relations (1,1)
	Making plans and discussing future action

Stage 3

Syllabus Area:	Cultural Awareness/Basic Communicative Proficiency
Main Skills:	Speaking, writing
General Theme/Activity:	Describing, discussing everyday life in a target language community (111,3)
	Engaging in discussion (1,10).

Implementing the workplan in manageable units

Stage 1

General Theme/Activity:	Learning in the target language about the culture associated with the target language.
	Exploring meaning.

Objectives:

- Develop pupils' world, cultural knowledge in the domain i.e. studies/work

- Develop learners' awareness of language related to this domain

- Develop learners' listening, reading skills

- Develop learners' strategies for coping with new vocabulary and structures.

Performance Targets	Possible Activites
• Exploring (global) meaning – abstracting the main points from a spoken, written target language test	• Provide any necessary background information • Provide/revise key vocabulary and expressions • Listening to/reading simplified version of text • Noting main information on the basis of guided questions • Scanning, skimming techniques to decipher topic, purpose, location • Transferring information to grids, charts True/False questions • Matching exercises: main ideas/paragraph, spoken text/written text.
• Identifying attitudes (e.g. critical, supportive, approving, disapproving) on the basis of a speaker's writer's use of language	• Using contextual clues e.g. register, intonation, vocabulary, expressions • Matching speech intentions/expressions • Selective listening e.g. groupwork: each member has specific task.
• Developing learners' knowledge of vocabulary and grammar related to the topic	• *Vocabulary*
• Guessing intelligently at the meaning of target language forms on the basis of related forms in use and/or other languages	- using cognates, near cognates, - grammatical knowledge - using contextual clues e.g. completing a gapped text - using dictionaries, synonyms/equivalents - word categorisation exercises based on semantic associations - matching exercises noun with verb

Consulting reference materials related to the vocabulary and grammar of the target language	• Look up the rule(s) Identify examples of rule(s)/structure(s) in the text • Form hypotheses – e.g. form a parallel phrase, Check in reference grammar
• Developing learners' awareness of register and appropriateness	Identifying conventions and features of text types
Stage 2 **General Theme/Activity**	**Managing a conversation** **Meeting and getting to know people and maintaining social relations** **Making plans and discussing future action**

Objectives:

- Relate domain (studies/work) to learners' personal experience
- Develop learners' speaking skills related to domain of studies/work
- Provide opportunities for learners to use vocabulary and structures introduced in previous stage
- Develop learners' strategies for managing a conversation.

Performance Targets	Possible Activities
• Developing learners' strategies for managing a conversation • Making learners aware of discourse structure. • Asking for repetition and/or clarification • Confirming that something has been understood • Expressing incomprehension • Ending a conversation • Developing learners' sensitivity to appropriateness and register • Enquiring about and describing studies involving different registers	• Work on verbal strategies • Reorder jumbled dialogues • Match functions and expressions • Choose from range of options to create dialogue • *Practice Linguistic Skills, Structures and Grammar* • Choose expression to suit situation • Separate and order two jumbled dialogues • Warm-up activities e.g. - matching exercises – cv/jobs, adverts/personal qualities/jobs

	• Pupils compare each others C.V. and suggest jobs
	• Look at adverts and choose job for self or others
	• Fill in chart from C.V.
	• Pupil mimes (a job) – others guess
	• Pupils listen to and study short model dialogues
	• Pupils practise dialogues in new contexts
	• Pupils re-order jumbled dialogues
	• Pupils complete dialogues i.e. complete open-ended dialogues, insert plausible/appropriate links in gapped dialogues
	• Pupils make up their own dialogues
• Asking about someone's plans for future studies and/or career possibilities	• Roleplay based on exchanging/sharing information, different scenarios, transactional and interactional tasks.
• Describing your own plans for future studies and/or career possibilities	• Interview/Pairwork: learners exchange information about themselves in pairs or groups
• Describing any ways in which learning the target language has affected your future prospects (e.g. career possibilities)	• Groupwork: work on topic of future plans
• Writing	• Filling in gaps in texts e.g. C.V., job application forms, letters of application
	• Matching jumbled sentences
	• Re-ordering jumbled sentences
	• Linking sentences to form a text
	• Writing a text on the basis of a similar text
	• Rewriting a text
	• Editing texts.

Peformance Targets	Possible Activities
• Enquiring about and describing studies • Describing your own plans for future studies And/or career possibilities	• Letter writing on basis of e.g. C.V. or other work text • Writing letter of application to job advertisement • Writing personal letters
Stage 3 **General Theme/Activity**	**Describing, discussing everyday life in a target language community** **Engaging in discussion**
Objectives • Make learners aware of differences between the two communities in relation to the domain of studies, work. • Develop pupils' ability to discuss in general terms issues concerning studies, work in relation to Ireland and a target language community	
Performance Targets	**Possible Activities**
• Discussing the relative advantages and disadvantages of the Irish way of life and that of a target language community in respect of this area of experience • Developing learners' skills for going beyond surface meaning • Identify meanings present but not overtly expressed • Working out implicit references of statements made in a spoken, written language target text • Making short pieces of meaningful and coherent target text out of jumbled or gapped target language sentences • Appreciating the "tone" of a text • Recognising the general tone of a spoken, written	• Acquire background information by reading, listening to texts • Revision of useful expressions and vocabulary • Evaluating content - match speed intentions and utterances - correct contradictions - finding evidence for making predictions on the basis of prior information - completing unfinished sentences; completing a gapped text before listening, reading - drawing conclusions - confirm, revise predictions • Choosing options from multiple choice questions

target language text on the basis of a speaker's/writer's use of language	e.g. words underlined in text: (a) positive (b) negative (c) neutral: which words refer to - - - • Practise Linguistic Skills, Structures and Grammar (on Page 17 of Syllabus) • Provide guidelines to structure the discussion
Expressing something as an opinion stating/confirming/insisting that something is true, untrue, denying, contradicting, taking sides in a discussion	• Learners' work in groups based on various opinions • Learners' practise linguistic conventions for this type of discourse e.g. interrupting, contradicting, disagreeing etc in small groups.
• Negotiating a compromise	• Learners' agree in groups on a compromise decision
• Writing	• Summarising a text • Giving a personal reaction to a text • Making comparisons between France and Ireland on the basis of a text • Writing formal/informal letters

6. Examples of Activities at Different Stages

6.1 Introduction

This chapter contains examples of activities at the three consecutive stages described in the previous chapter. Exemplars in Italian of these activities are provided in the document designed to be used in conjunction with these guidelines. There is an underlying progression relating to the activities i.e. from activities aimed primarily at developing receptive skills in listening and reading, building up vocabulary etc. to productive skills in speaking and writing which build upon and use the skills acquired at the previous stage. An example is given of how a text can be reintroduced at successive stages to facilitate this progression in the development of the learners' skills. Even in the initial stage it is important to provide learners with opportunities to try out their hypotheses about the target language and with feedback about their performance.

Speaking and writing tasks with in-built support that place limited demands Oh the learners can fulfil this function.

6.2   Stage 1

(a)   Listening/Reading activities

The first phase of this model is an introductory one providing a basis for the later stages and ensuring that the pupils' spoken and written production is supported by having ample input before they are required to engage in productive activities.

(b)   Pairwork

In stage one the pupils could work initially in pairs on vocabulary learning activities. They might then for example engage in grouping words into semantic networks based on various categories e.g. classifying key words and phrases from a text under grammatical or other headings. This prepares them for the main language content and provides them with a good example of what to expect in the text.

Pairwork activities might involve the exchange of information which is genuinely new to the other partner, either because the knowledge is personal or because they have each been supplied with complementary details.

Pairwork could also involve learners listening to or reading prepared dialogues. Initial activities might also require them to match up utterances or to order a jumbled dialogue. These exercises can be done by pupils working on their own. They could then discuss in pairs e.g the roles to be played, the order of the dialogue etc. Follow- up activities could build on their receptive competence by requiring them to construct new dialogues based on the ones they have just being working on. Other follow up activities such as one partner reporting what the other partner said allows for the language to be moved one step further e.g. into the past tense, indirect speech etc. Writing skills could be incorporated by having learners fill in missing words in worksheets with similar dialogues. Working on dialogues is also a suitable activity for pairwork. Learners are firstly encouraged to formulate questions and then make comparisons with a native speaker   model. This provides them with feedback about their hypotheses about the target language system.

(c)   Roleplay

Roleplay activities in particular provide for an optimal workout of the general activities/themes and performance targets specified under Basic Communicative   Proficiency in the syllabus. Such activities require learners to use language in a number of ways and provide a means of going beyond the necessary limited discourse of the classroom. They also offer an opportunity to focus on such aspects of communicative competence as appropriateness and accuracy. Roleplay situations can be selected to develop the learners' command of general social language or to elicit particular types of language based on simple or complex situations. Simple situations might involve such functions as ordering a drink, asking for information, describing needs etc. The syllabus content also envisages equipping learners with skills necessary for communication in more complex situations which, for example, might involve a degree of persuasion such as getting the other person to do something s/he does not want or expect to do.

The organisation of roleplay activities should provide detailed guidelines for learners on how to proceed. Initial roleplay activities might be based on short scenarios where the functions and linguistic choices are limited; gradually learners could proceed to situations where they are free to create their role and have a wider choice in what they can say and a wider choice of linguistic forms to express meaning. Such activities could also have a built-in 'tension' element and require participants to defend or oppose certain positions.

Simulation activities can be based on more complex situations still and involve participants in more imaginary situations. Simulation activities provide an opportunity for project work also and learners could engage in a co-operative activity such as the preparation of a radio or television programme etc.

6.3   Stage 2

(a)   Introduction

The introductory phase (stage one) of the integrated approach as suggested above is aimed at equipping the pupils with the background knowledge, vocabulary and structures that they will require when they engage in speaking and writing activities related to the chosen topics. While some speaking and writing activities were suggested these were mainly of the guided variety

within a supporting framework. Activities of a freer nature i.e. involving choice and greater independence on the part of the learners can then be introduced to build on the skills developed in an earlier phase.

(b)   Speaking Activities

While texts can be used, as in stage one, as stimulus material for dialogues, pairwork and roleplay they can also provide the basis for more open-ended oral activities such as giving personal responses to the content.

In addition to dialogues, pairwork and roleplay pupils can engage in other oral activities such as giving personal responses to text, as in the following example:

(c)   Writing Activities

The introductory phase (stage one) of the integrated approach as suggested above is aimed at equipping the pupils with the background knowledge, vocabulary and structures that they will require when they engage in speaking and writing activities related to the chosen topics. Writing activities are not therefore introduced until stages two and three with the tasks suggested for stage two being considerably less demanding than those suggested in stage three. In stage two the initial writing activities could involve matching exercises e.g. sentences, dialogues, filling in a form on the basis of information in another text to create a new text. Other possible activities include writing formal and informal letters. Where appropriate pupils should be given clear guidelines as to layout, expressions etc.

6.4   Stage 3:   Reading and Listening

(a)   Introduction

Stage three of the suggested approach is based on applying more demanding Performance Targets to the chosen theme of work/studies. The specified objectives for reading and listening are intended to be used in conjunction with texts that would be considered more demanding in terms of content and linguistic difficulty. The activities are also aimed at helping pupils to go beyond the surface meaning of particular texts and to evaluate content by identifying attitude, tone and giving and justifying personal reactions to the content.

(b)   Examples of Reading/Listening Activities

The Reading and listening activities at Stage 3 would be more demanding than those of previous stages both in terms of the content of the stimulus material and the tasks the learners have to carry out. The stimulus materials might contain more complex language and/or ideas while the task could require the learners to go beyond surface meaning by identifying meanings not overtly stated.

©   Speaking Activities

The speaking skills in stage 3 are based also on expressing personal opinions, sometimes at a more abstract level and engaging in discussion and debate. To enable pupils to participate in these types of activities it will be necessary to provide background and cultural information as well as vocabulary and structures needed in these kinds of activities. In the case of the topic of work, materials describing Italian people's attitudes toward work-related issues and/or surveys showing comparisons etc. could be particularly suitable. Groupwork, while also suitable at an intermediary stage, could be used at stage three for the purposes of developing areas covered at Stage 2 in pairwork. Having worked on exercises in pairs learners might then be organised into larger groups to introduce new elements involving 3 or 4 speakers or to work co-operatively on filling in words in a worksheet, words that proved difficult. Group work is also suitable for problem solving activities or for working Oh debates etc. The general activity. Engaging in discussion provides a framework on which to base pairwork and groupwork. Pairs or groups could initially work on expressing something as an opinion. Groups could then take up a stance and work on ordering points in a discussion. An opposing group could work on rebutting these points through working on such functions as

> stating that something is true/untrue
> insisting that something is true/untrue d
> denying
> contradicting

finally groups could work together on tasks such as

> negotiating a compromise
> concluding a discussion.

To make sure that all members of the group participate in the debate, cue-cards could be distributed assigning different roles to different students.

(d)   Writing Activities

The writing activities suggested at Stage 3 - summarising the main points of a text, giving a personal reaction to a text, making comparisons on the basis of a text, writing formal/informal letters are also more demanding than the activities suggested for Stage 2, particularly if the texts used as a stimulus are more complex.

6.5   Conclusion

As outlined in the Introduction it may not be always considered possible or desirable to draw up such a detailed scheme of work. It is desirable however that the nature and progression of activities conform to some framework designed to facilitate the integration of syllabus content and the planned development of learner skills.

7.   Literary texts

Summary: 7.1   Introduction

7.2   Literary Texts and language awareness

7.3   Literary Texts and Cultural Awareness

7.1   Introduction

It is envisaged in the Leaving Certificate syllabus that learners would be exposed to some literary texts in the target language. Literature in particular encourages an affective involvement through personal response and so promotes the students' personal development. While language gives access to literature, literature is an authentic example of how language functions. Learners' linguistic competence can be enhanced by learning to identify communicative function and the way this is realised in literary texts. Therefore the General Activity/Themes in the syllabus, as well as requiring students to:

- Read modern literary texts (notably novels, short stories, poems and plays) in the target language aim
- also to develop their awareness of how communicative function is achieved in such texts through activities such as:
- Exploring target language texts as sources of linguistic information/illustration
- Identifying meanings present but not overtly expressed in such a text
- Appreciating the tone of such a text, etc.

7.2   Literary texts and language awareness

The development of such language awareness skills can aid the language learning process, widen the learner's experience and enhance his/her enjoyment of reading. These skills can be fostered by encouraging students through perspectives such as understanding language as a specific linguistic variety, as the symbolisation of the author's vision etc.

7.3   Literary texts and cultural awareness

The learners' cultural awareness can also be promoted through reading literary texts. Foreign literature offers students an insight into the culture of the target language community and literature provides access to culture in a meaningful, contextualised and authentic way. The Cultural Awareness component of the syllabus contains numerous suggestions for methodological approaches to literary texts in this regard e.g. understanding literary texts dealing with aspects of the life of a target language community including:

-        everyday life
-        folklore traditional customs

The approaches suggested in the syllabus therefore are to go beyond plot, character and content and to continue both an affective and intellectual interaction with the text.

7.4   Selection of texts

It is essential that the selection of texts reflect linguistic and conceptual   appropriateness if learners are not to remain indifferent and uninterested. It might be possible in some cases for students to be involved in the selection of texts on the basis of prior consideration of selected extracts. Learners should also be encouraged to consider taking up the option (where available) of engaging in project work based on literary texts. In oral work in the classroom students should be encouraged to discuss foreign literary texts they have read.

8. Assessment

Summary   8.1   Introduction

8.2   Short-term Objectives

8.3   Assessment Criteria

8.4   Grade Descriptions

8.1   Introduction

The syllabus outlines the parameters of summative assessment. Ongoing assessment of pupil performance is a constant feature of good teaching which facilitates improved pupil performance and provides a basis upon which teaching and learning programmes can be planned. Learners should also be encouraged to assess their own progress. The skilled and judicious use of a variety of assessment techniques can have a positive effect on classroom practice and allow for the early identification of high and low achievers and under-achievers. There is a continuum of assessment, ranging from classroom observation, questioning and dialogue, homework to structured tests developed at school level and national certificate examinations. More formal testing in the sense of summative judgement at the end of a specific period of time (e.g. a school term) or of a specific unit of study (e.g. one or more General   Activity/Themes of the syllabus) may take the form of oral, or written tests or   assignments developed by the teacher.

8.2   Short-term Objectives

To provide for continuity of learning it may be helpful for teachers to identify short-term objectives in relation to the syllabus. Such an approach could be based on the selection of one or more General Activity/Themes across the three components of the syllabus with some of the Performance Targets providing the projected learning outcomes.

8.3   Assessment Criteria

As outlined in the syllabus assessment criteria will take account of:

(i)   ability to transfer meaning and

(ii)   degrees of accuracy and appropriateness of language including the range of vocabulary and structures used.

8.3.1   Oral Production

The following criteria will be used to assess oral competence in the public examinations

- range of vocabulary
- range of expression
- awareness and use of grammar
- independence from examiner support
- appropriateness
- fluency
- pronunciation

8.3.2   Written Production – Higher Level

The following criteria will be used in the assessment of written production at the Higher Level in the public examinations:

- range and appropriateness of vocabulary
- range and accuracy in use of structures
- development and/or manipulation of stimulus
- organisation of content.

8.3.3   Written Production - Ordinary Level

The following criteria will be used to assess written examinations:

- intelligibility of message
- development and/or manipulation of stimulus
- awareness and use of grammar
- range of vocabulary

8.4   Grade Descriptions

The following are descriptions of candidate performance in the public examinations relating to the award of various grades:

8.4.1   ORAL/WRITTEN PRODUCTION – HIGHER LEVEL

A;   very good knowledge of idiom. Comprehensive use of language (adjectives, adverbs, verbs, etc.).
Displays ability to select appropriate vocabulary.
Variation of sentence construction; ability to use a range of structures, with few major errors.
All ideas are well and clearly linked throughout, showing an ability to handle a topic under
discussion and showing an ability to convey and understand subtleties of language nuance.
Only occasional and minor errors of pronunciation - good intonation.

B: Good knowledge of idiom. Use of varied and appropriate vocabulary. Vocabulary for the most
part appropriately and correctly used. Ability to vary sentence construction. Ability to use tenses
correctly most of the time. A few basic errors and weakness in one or two specific areas, but
generally accurate in handling linguistic structures. Logical organisation of ideas, with appropriate
reaction to nuances of language. Reasonable intonation, despite occasional mispronunciation.
Sound general vocabulary.

C   Some variation in choice of vocabulary. Ability to compensate for lexical
deficiencies. Some success in varying sentence constructions.
Quality of accuracy is inconsistent. Basic grammar generally mastered, but weakness in more
difficult areas.   Reasonable attempt at linking ideas, and appropriate reaction to questions.
Ability to sustain communication. Quality of pronunciation intonation and rhythm inconsistent.

D   Frequent repetition of common words and phrases. Able to use simple constructions.
Considerable degree of L1 interference in sentence patterns and   phrasing. Frequent serious
errors. A number of elements of basic grammar not mastered. Some organisation of ideas, but
general weakness in linking these ideas. Responds to questions without appropriate variation or
expansion. Frequent serious mispronunciation.

E   Very limited vocabulary. Incorrect use of vocabulary. Only able to produce the simplest of
sentence patterns. Little evidence of grammatical awareness. Most verb endings incorrect.

Genders and cases frequently wrong/inconsistent. Points presented in isolation. Much irrelevancy. Sentences presented in isolation. No attempt to relate ideas. Only just comprehensible. Mistakes in pronunciation seriously impede intelligibility.

LISTENING/READING – HIGHER LEVEL

A   Candidates understand gist and identify main points and detail in a variety of types of authentic language. Highly developed ability to deduce meaning from context. They recognise opinions, attitudes and emotions and are able to draw conclusions, display awareness of stylistic variation.

B   Candidates understand and identify main points and details, in a variety of types of authentic language. They recognise opinions, attitudes and emotions, but many have difficulty in interpreting and drawing conclusions.

C   Candidates identify main points and extract details from a variety of types of authentic language. They can understand references to past, present and future events and can use context to deduce meaning. Opinions, emotions and attitudes are mainly understood as expressed by actions

D   Candidates identify some key points and extract some information from a variety of authentic language. Recognition of tenses is not always correct. They are unaware of all but the most overtly expressed opinions, emotions and attitudes.

E   Candidates identify some key points and extract some information from authentic language, but the broad content remains inaccessible to them.

        They are unable to deduce meaning from context.

ORAL/WRITTEN PRODUCTION – ORDINARY LEVEL

A   Message intelligible despite the presence of errors. Responds to questions with some variation/expansion. Ability to use simple constructions. Mastery of some elements of basic grammar. Good knowledge of common words and phrases.

B   Message intelligible despite frequent error. Responds to questions without significant variation or expansion. Ability to use very basic constructions. Inconsistent application of basic grammar rules. Limited knowledge of common words and phrases.

C   Message barely intelligible/task incomplete. Needs examiner support in responding to questions. Difficulty with even basic constructions. Little awareness of grammar. Very limited knowledge of even common words and phrases.

D   Error frequency seriously impedes intelligibility - task only partially attempted. Limited response to questions despite examiner's support. Most elements of basic grammar not mastered - despite the presence of occasional correct phrases. Very little vocabulary

E   Message unintelligible. Task barely attempted.   Inability to use examiner support in formulating answers. Hardly any knowledge of basic grammar rules. Vocabulary largely consists of mother tongue cognates.

LISTENING/READING – ORDINARY LEVEL

A   Candidates understand gist and identify main points in a limited range of types of authentic language. They recognise overtly stated opinions, attitudes and emotions.

B   Candidates identify some key points and extract some information from a limited range of types of authentic language. Opinions, attitudes, emotions are understood as expressed by actions/intonations.

C   The broad content of the text is accessible to candidates though some points elude them. Candidates understand some isolated details but fail to grasp the gist of the text. Recognition of opinions, attitudes and emotions causes difficulty.

D   Many key points even of surface meaning elude candidates. Opinions, attitudes of emotions remain inaccessible to them. Candidates rely largely on question content to guide them through the text.

E   The broad content of the text is inaccessible to candidates. Some isolated details may be grasped. Candidates rely entirely on question content to guide them through the text.