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Towards an ITE literacy teacher curriculum:

Component content descriptions

Compiled for the Consolidated Literacy Working Group of the Primary Teacher Education Project

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union.
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Introduction

The *Curriculum Framework for literacy teaching in Initial Primary Teacher Education*

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has issued a draft ***Curriculum Framework for literacy teaching in Initial Primary Teacher Education*** (DHET, 2019). This Framework was developed with reference to the draft ***Knowledge and Practice Standards for primary teacher education graduates: language and literacy*** (DHET, 2019). The Framework must always be read with reference to these standards.

The Framework provides a systematic approach to the professional development of language and literacy teachers (according to the standards) in order to support improved learning outcomes in the primary school curriculum.

A **curriculum framework** is a set of guidelines defining and explaining what a curriculum is required to be like or to contain – in other words, it is a guide for the construction of actual curricula. It sets the scope, directions, standards and limits or boundaries of possible curricula. A curriculum framework is **not** a curriculum – but it specifies how such a curriculum might be structured and regulated. It provides a framework, the underlying principles and standards, within which actual curriculum content is to be developed. The framework is not simply a set of rules – variation is possible in implementing a curriculum framework.

Possible components of a literacy teacher curriculum

A fair degree of guidance on what the possible components of an actual literacy teacher curriculum should contain is found in the above mentioned standards. However standards do not usually specify the actual subject matter content (though that content should be aligned to the standards).

This document has been prepared to provide a set of content descriptions of various components that might be considered for inclusion in the designing of a comprehensive and coherent literacy teacher curriculum in the various Initial Teacher Education qualifications.

How these components are put together in modules or courses in each year of the qualification in what year or sequence and how integrated will be influenced by the requirements of the particular higher education institution and the capacity and availability of staff for teaching the components.

All the caveats

A number of caveats have to be declared here:

- These descriptions are not mandatory in any sense. The actual content of the curriculum for a university programme literacy teacher programme is the responsibility of the particular university.

- This list of components should not be seen as a prescribed set of equal sized, equal credit, equal study time modules in a rigid sequence. In practice, various course or module configurations, blends and sequences could be designed.

- These components do not in any way have equal credit or importance weighting. Some of the suggested components would require the student teacher to master highly detailed knowledge and practical teaching skills – decoding is an obvious example – that would require significant dedicated time. Other components, though sometimes of great conceptual or practical importance, might require little time at all. There is no easy solution here.

- The overall approach used in selecting and elaborating the content of the possible components is based on the author's reading of the current state of literacy teaching research and evidence from practice and is in harmony with a growing international scientific evidence-based consensus of what works best for teaching literacy. But the descriptions remain necessarily tentative and will always be works in progress according to developments in the practical science of teaching reading. They should be revised regularly.

- This content relates to what teachers should know and practice. It is not a description of what the child learners should be taught and know.

Bringing knowledge and practice together

Designing a higher education institution's literacy teaching curriculum is complicated by the fact that much of the knowledge content in the qualification programme is knowledge about pedagogical practice (that is Pedagogical Content Knowledge) that should include strong elements of actual practice (a sort of pre-practice before the usual period of teaching practice or work integrated learning done in a school classroom).

This suggests that it may not be a good idea to have purely theoretical or disciplinary modules. Certainly there is important disciplinary knowledge about language and language acquisition and learning, theories of literacy and literacies, theories about how reading happens, theories about the so called Big Five (Phonemic awareness; Alphabetic principle and Decoding (Phonics); Vocabulary; Fluency and Comprehension) and about literature and texts for children. This knowledge is needed, but there is so much pedagogical content knowledge directly related to these, and a need for practical competence in teaching them, that it is really difficult to separate disciplinary from pedagogical knowledge.

Many of the elements in teaching reading and writing require real familiarity with practical procedures (for example the variety of ways in which reading and writing can be done in a classroom (e.g. shared reading/shared writing, group guided reading, paired reading, silent reading/reading aloud, guided writing, independent reading/ independent writing)). These methods and techniques need to be learned and practised long before they are practised in formal teaching practice in the classroom.

Also, student teachers need to be attuned to the vital role of emotions, values and attitudes in learning to read. They must be familiar with methods and techniques that will help make reading instruction engaging and pleasurable for learners.

The component content descriptions

	Component	Key topics
Quick overview		
1	How do children learn to read and write?	Definition and meaning of literacy Language and literacy Processes of learning to read and write A comprehensive reading programme Enabling conditions for literacy Barriers to literacy Expectations and assessment
Teaching reading and writing		
2	Decoding	The components necessary for decoding Assessing decoding skills Decoding across the grades and phases Decoding in African languages, Afrikaans and English
3	Vocabulary	Oral and written vocabularies Importance of reading in vocabulary development The reciprocal relationship between vocabulary and reading Explicit instruction on vocabulary Word learning strategies Planning vocabulary development BICS and CALP vocabularies Assessing vocabulary knowledge Vocabulary resources Special issues in African languages and English
4	Fluency	Components of fluency Assessing fluency
5	Comprehension	Components and types of comprehension Teaching comprehension Critical thinking and literacy
6	Writing	Functions of writing in society and school Teaching handwriting Teaching writing Teaching spelling Teaching sentence and paragraph construction Writing genres Making multimodal texts The writing friendly classroom

Aspects of literacy development		
7	Motivation and response in reading	Interests, attitudes and motivation in reading Motivating children to read Response in reading Motivation and response in relation to genres Reading for information and pleasure The literacy teacher as a role model The literacy environment
8	Texts for children	Knowledge of and access to children's literature and reading resources Selecting texts by genre, reading level appropriateness, difficulty and contextual relevance Reading to children Reading from the Internet Making own resources A text rich environment
9	Working with a school literacy curriculum	What teachers need to know about an official school curriculum About the South African ***CAPS*** The ***CAPS*** on literacy ***CAPS*** reading and writing activities Using the South African Department of Basic Education workbooks
10	Assessment and remediation	What is assessment and why is it important? Assessment in the context of the reading and writing development continuum Assessing the different components of reading and writing Types of assessment instruments Literacy assessment responses Understanding the reasons for reading and writing difficulties and how difficulties can be addressed Types of reading difficulties
11	Planning and consolidation	Why is planning important? Different levels of planning Understanding and planning for reading and writing progression The role of routines in supporting reading and writing development Supporting reading outside the class The complexities of Foundation Phase planning The literacy environment Reflection on practice

12	Literacy and literacies	The terminology and conceptualisation of literacy and literacies Literacy and multilingualism Teaching knowledge literacies – visual, digital, etc. The social practices approach to literacy(ies) Literacy debates – the Reading Wars
	Teaching EFAL AND FAL	
13	Teaching English as First Additional Language	Language learning Knowledge of the English language The issue of English spelling Phase and grade appropriate multimodal instructional strategies and methods Recognition of the variety of language teaching and learning contexts BICS and CALP Benchmarks
14	Teaching African languages or Afrikaans as a First Additional Language	Language learning Knowledge of the language Phase and grade appropriate multimodal instructional strategies and methods Recognition of the variety of language teaching and learning contexts BICS and CALP Benchmarks

Components 1 to 12 apply directly to the teaching of reading and writing in all the home languages. Some of the content will also apply to additional language teaching.

Components 13 and 14 directly address the teaching of first additional languages.

Component content descriptions

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Components 1 to 10 direct apply to the teaching of reading and writing in all the home languages. Some of the content will also apply to additional language teaching.

Components 11 and 12 directly address teaching of first additional languages.

Note Well

For each component description the relevant knowledge and practice standards are listed using the following key:

Knowledge = K　　Practice = P　　EFAL = E　　FAL = F

1 How do children learn to read and write?

Standards: K1–K21, P1–P6, E1–6, F1–F6

Definition and meaning of literacy
Relationship between language and literacy
Processes of learning to read and write and literacy development in children
A comprehensive reading programme
Enabling conditions for literacy
Barriers to literacy
Expectations and assessment

The need for a foundational overview

There is need for a simple overview of what reading is and what learning to read (and write) involves. This overview should enable the student teacher to see what the literacy curriculum as a whole has to deal with and to recognise that literacy involves a continuum of development.

This overview should be presented early in the qualification before student teachers engage in the details of the various components of the curriculum.

Such an overview would need to include the following parts:

1. The definition and meaning of literacy

[Standards: K6, K7]

A basic definition of literacy (the ability to read and write) has to be understood along with the modern extensions of the word to cover various so-called literacies (knowledge of a particular subject, or a particular type of knowledge, or ways in which literacy is used).

The purpose of reading is making sense of a communication received through a printed (or handwritten or electronic digital) text and that writing is the encoding of a communication from which others can make meaning.

The ability to read is always influenced by the readers' knowledge of the language and vocabulary of written communication, their background knowledge relating to the communication, and their particular social context (which may involve multimodal forms of literacy communications).

Communication through texts is vital to the running of all modern societies and individuals can gain enormous benefits, including pleasurable enjoyment, from being fluent readers. In South Africa it is the constitutional right of every person to have a basic education, which includes being taught to be a literate.

2. The relationship between language and literacy

[Standards: K1, K2, K3, K4, K5, E1, E2, E3, E4, F1, F2, F3, F4]

Literacy learning rests on a foundation of oral language and literacy teachers need to demonstrate knowledge of the key components of language.

Scientific evidence supports the fact that reading is part of language. To read, we have to break up spoken words into smaller units, understand that letters represent the sounds of those smaller units, have a vocabulary that is meaningful in relation to our background knowledge, and have the motivation to read to gain both valuable information and enjoyment.

Student teachers need to know certain things about language, that acquiring a language as a young child is a natural capacity all human beings have, that all languages are in principle equal, and that, normally after a certain age (about 9 years old), one has to learn a further language rather than simply acquire it. The basic terms describing all language use must be known (e.g. phonology, morphology, grammar, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics) as should an outline of the differences between home language acquisition and additional language learning.

Student teachers should be taught an elementary description of how the brain is engaged in the reading process: different parts process the sounds we hear in language, another part (that predominantly registers visual details (and particularly the details of human faces and objects)) is activated by the visual features of the letters, and another part accesses meaning.

Learning to read is not a natural process, unlike learning to speak a mother tongue. No child receives any "natural" practice in understanding that words are made up of smaller sound units. To read we have to adapt, or train, our brain to perform in ways it wasn't naturally designed to work. Strong neural connections have to be made between those parts of the brain that deal with the sounds and the grammar of a language with the part of the brain that registers visual details, so that writing can be recognised as a representation of spoken language.

3. The processes of learning to read and literacy development in children

[Standards: K5, K6, K7, K8, K9, K10, K11, K12, K13, K14, K15, K16, K17, K18, K19, K20]

To understand the process of learning to read a new vocabulary of terms has to be learned such as: phoneme, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, decoding, phonics, fluency and comprehension.

Though there are many ways of learning to read, a growing scientific consensus is that the following is a fair description of an optimum process a child passes through to become a fluent reader:

The beginnings of reading come when children engage in **pre-literacy activities**. They hear stories read to them from books and develop a **concept of print** – books and other text forms – and gain a sense that texts are somehow important and meaningful and pleasurable. This is done largely through parents or teachers reading stories from books and from looking at picture books. They learn how to hold a book and turn pages and understand that, although they cannot actually read yet, that print is read from left to right and top to bottom, that printed words consist of letters and that spaces appear between words, and that print is often accompanied by pictures. This print awareness is a child's earliest introduction to literacy. At the same time the child may scribble "writing" as a visual imitation of printed text or of things a parent, caregiver or teacher has written. In a playschool or classroom the presence of print in its various forms can be reinforced through signs, labels, posters, calendars, and so forth. Children with print awareness begin to understand that print has different functions depending on the context in which it appears, e.g. menus list food choices, a book tells a story, a sign can announce a favourite restaurant or warn of danger.

The next crucial stage is for children to understand that there is a **relationship between spoken language and the words and letters in written language**.

The first sub-stage of this is for children to develop the **phonemic awareness** that there are separate sounds in words and a broader **phonological awareness** that words are made up of sets of individual sounds. Through various activities, many of which can double as play, children begin to understand the sound structure of spoken words. It is important to note that phonemic awareness is an auditory skill; children do not need to know letter shapes and sounds (phonics) in order to develop basic phonemic awareness.

The next sub-stage is learning the **alphabetic principle** – that the individual sounds that they are now aware of in spoken language are represented by letters of the alphabet. They learn that writing – print – represents these sounds, or phonemes. Thereafter they have to develop the understanding that the letters on the page—the *m,* the *a*, and the *b* and so on —represent these units of sound.

In practice, many of these things may happen simultaneously. Though one can talk of 'stages' most of this early reading development is not a strictly sequential process.

When children reach this level of print and phonological awareness and have understood the alphabetic principle they are ready to learn to read. For some children, it is easy; for others, it is very difficult.

The next stage is the **phonics** stage in which the children learn to know and match letters or letter combinations with word sounds, learn the rules of spelling, and use this information to **decode** (read) and **encode** (write) words. Phonics plays an vitally important, albeit relatively brief, role in early reading development.

Their growing knowledge of letter-sounds correspondence enables children to blend letters together into words, and as they begin to rapidly recognise word patterns they begin to read fluently – that is at a good pace and accurately. These phonics skills enable children to decode words they have not seen before. After extensive practice the process of reading becomes automatic – and now more attention can be devoted to meaning (comprehension) in the various texts they are able to read.

If children are taught reading in their home language systematically and explicitly (and at the same time motivated through pleasurable activities, hearing good books and gaining meaning from what they read) nearly all children (whatever their socio-economic background) should be able to read at an acceptable level of **fluency** at the end of Grade 1 in the African languages (where the correspondence between sounds and letters is regular), but often after a somewhat longer period in English (because of certain irregularities) (in more technical terms, African languages have transparent orthographies, English an opaque one).

It is vital that all reading teachers understand that unless children can get to read fluently (that is not so slowly, labouriously and inefficiently that they do not have enough working memory to actually remember what they are reading), they will not comprehend what they read, much less relate the ideas to their background knowledge.

During this stage **handwriting** (or keyboarding) will have been taught so that children can start to encode communication (the reverse process to decoding).

The final stage is that of **comprehension** (though of course various degrees of comprehension have been developing all along). This is, of course, the main purpose of reading.

Comprehension is a complex matter and it can be argued that it is a lifelong process that includes (once the automaticity of decoding is established), learning how to make sense of ever more complex texts, learning about inferences and deductions that can be made from texts, distinguishing between literal meanings and metaphoric or ironic ones, understanding the text types and genres and purposes of texts, using one's background knowledge, critically analysing, and so forth. Real attention has to be given to teaching comprehension (not only the assessment of meaningful reading but how development of comprehension is taught and scaffolded). Means of monitoring comprehension are necessary.

Comprehension requires a growing **vocabulary** of which only a small portion can actually be taught. Most vocabulary must be learned through reading and strategies for learning the meaning of new words have to be taught. The more academic vocabulary of school and subject learning also has to be developed. Good **general knowledge** or background knowledge is also important in making texts comprehensible, meaningful and interesting.

Lastly, throughout these stages, is the matter of the child's **response to reading** (through pleasure, gaining of knowledge, and the power to communicate through effective writing). The affect side of learning to read is of great importance.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve reading and good comprehension without the child's personal access to reading material. You cannot learn to read without regular reading. To learn to read you have to read!

4. An outline of an ideal comprehensive reading programme

[Standards: K7, K8, K9, K15, P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6]

A comprehensive reading programme that a teacher implements should be logically structured to develop all the components of reading and writing in a sensible sequence and progression (although of course in practice many things happen at more or less the same time).

A programme should explicitly teach about the sounds of language – that words can be broken up into these smaller units of language, that the letters represent these units of language – phonics. But we also want to teach children about language and to build their vocabulary. We want them to have a knowledge base. We want them to practise reading and to read for meaning and pleasure.

There is general consensus that any curriculum should include the so-called Big-Five: Phonemic Awareness; Phonics/Alphabetic principle; Vocabulary; Fluency/Accuracy; and Comprehension. (Note that "phonics" is only a component (though an essential one) of reading development – phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction in phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension strategies to create a complete reading programme.)

Foundation Phase teachers need to include explicit instruction for beginning readers in becoming aware that spoken words are made up of smaller units of sounds, becoming familiar with letter-sound correspondences and common spelling conventions and their use in identifying printed words, "sight" recognition of frequent words, and reading interesting books at an appropriate level. Reading fluency must be developed. The sound-letter correspondences should be taught in a sequence based partly on what a logical sequence should be in terms of the most frequent letters first and partly based on the sequence followed in whatever primers, readers or Department of Basic Education workbooks are used in the school for the particular language.

Children who have begun to read independently (in Grade 2 and above) and develop automaticity in their reading, should be encouraged to continue to sound out new words in the texts that they read, recognizing words primarily through their letter-sound relationships. Although they can use illustrations and contextual clues in the text, they should not use them as a substitute for the information provided by the letters of the word. Word recognition accuracy and reading fluency should be regularly monitored and assessed.

From the earliest grades the teacher's instruction should build comprehension skills (for both oral reading and reading texts themselves), provide guidance on comprehension strategies such as identifying the main idea, summarizing, predicting events and outcomes of upcoming text, drawing inferences, and monitoring for coherence and misunderstandings.

As soon as children learn some letters they should be encouraged to write them, to use them to begin writing words, and to use words to begin writing sentences. Writing should take place frequently so that learners become fully accustomed to it. Correct spelling should be developed through explicit instruction and practice.

Because you cannot learn to read without reading there should be daily independent reading of texts of interest to the child and at the appropriate level of difficulty and challenge. In all grades independent reading outside school should be encouraged through daily homework assignments. Given that most vocabulary development comes through independent reading this is vital for reading development. Both the classroom and the school should be literacy rich environments with reading corners and libraries where children can engage in reading activities with enjoyment.

5. The enabling conditions for learning to read and write

[Standards: K4, K15, K20, K21, P6, E6, F6]

Teachers have to take into account the home literacy environment and the crucial role that exposure to and the practice of reading has on literacy development. Some children acquire a kind of "emergent literacy" indirectly from their parents and pre-school activities. The stronger this pre-literacy foundation is, the easier children find it to learn to read and write once they enter formal school. Alphabetic knowledge in pre-school is the single best predictor of later reading success.

Teachers should know that children's first experiences of literacy learning should be in a language with which they are completely familiar.

Children have to be engaged in the process of learning to read with engaging and pleasurable activities.

Teachers need to be readers and writers themselves so they can model for children literate ways of behaving and participating in literate communities.

Effective literacy learning depends on the availability and skilled use of appropriate resources, which must include attractive reading texts (and may include digital texts) and simple writing materials.

6. The barriers to learning to read and write

[Standards: K1]

Many of the barriers to reading are the flip side of what enables reading development. Poverty – coming from a lower socio-economic status household or community – is a major barrier to becoming a fluent reader.

Because reading and vocabulary development are, unsurprisingly, highly dependent on reading actual texts, the absence of reading material in home and school is devastating.

Lastly, the lack of role models who read and show the pleasure they get from reading is a major barrier in contemporary culture.

7. Expectations and assessment of young readers

[Standards: K8, K15, K16, P5, P6, E5, F5]

The average three-year-old has heard 20 million words spoken. If from a very talkative, socially interactive family, he or she may have heard 35 million words. Three-year-olds of uncommunicative families may have heard less than 10 million words spoken.

The average child has about a **700 word** vocabulary by the age of three, children of very sociable families have a vocabulary of about **1 100 words**, and the children of uncommunicative families have only about a **500 word** vocabulary.

It is from this variable starting point that the Foundation Phase teacher has to develop reading development and monitor the progress of the children towards the goal – that by Grade 3 the children should be fluent readers of texts appropriate for that level. Indeed there is a broad consensus that with correct teaching and adequate resources Foundation Phase school classes should have practically no illiterate learners, and at least 80% of learners should learn to decode. By the end of Grade 2, learners should be reading 45-60 words per minute in order to be able to learn from printed materials.

The downside of not achieving the steps towards this goal is catastrophic:

- Children who arrive in first grade lacking phonemic awareness are going to have a difficult time learning to read.
- Children who are poor readers at the end of first grade almost never catch up to their peers by the end of primary school.
- Weak readers avoid reading, which prevents their growth in vocabulary and fluency.

The research evidence is that by the end of the third grade all normal healthy children should be fluent readers of texts appropriate for this level and gain some enjoyment from reading. This is an expectation that applies both to the learners and to the quality of teaching and the presence of reading resources that enables this progress.

As in all learning, assessment and the feedback from assessment are necessary. All literacy instructors should have knowledge and practice in the use of reading baseline assessment tools and assessment instruments for all the components of reading.

2 Decoding

[Standards: K5, K8, K10, K11, K14, K18, P3]

The components necessary for decoding
Assessing decoding skills
Decoding across the grades and phases
Decoding in African languages, Afrikaans and English

After children have realised that there is a relationship between spoken language and the words and letters in written language they move into the **decoding** stage of learning to read. (In more technically language they have developed the **phonemic awareness** that there are separate sounds in words and a broader **phonological awareness** that words are made up of sets of individual sounds, and that the individual sounds that they are now aware of are represented by the letters of the alphabet – the **alphabetic principle**.)

Learning to teach decoding requires a set of new terminology and some attention to detailed knowledge and the practice of **phonics**. Whilst there are general principles in teaching decoding there are also substantial differences between how it is applied in the cases of English, Afrikaans and the various African languages in South Africa. Two valuable resources here are the final version of the Department of Basic Education's ***National Framework for the teaching of reading in African languages in the Foundation Phase*** (DBE, 2018) and, for English, the United Kingdom Department for Education and Skills' ***Letters and Sounds: Principles and Practice of High Quality Phonics. Primary National Strategy – phase one teaching programme*** (Department for Education and Skills, 2008). Decoding work should receive the priority it deserves in teacher training.

The importance of phonics in learning to read is clear, as is stated by Castles *et al* (2018, p. 6):

> It is uncontroversial among reading scientists that coming to appreciate the relationship between letters and sounds is necessary and nonnegotiable when learning to read in alphabetic writing systems and that this is most successfully achieved through phonics instruction.

The components necessary for decoding

Phonemic awareness and phonological awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate (segmenting, blending, changing) sounds in spoken words and the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds and understanding that words can be broken apart into individual sounds (phonemes). There are a range of activities that the teacher must learn to be able to do to develop this awareness, if not already done in Grade R. Basically, the children have to tune into sounds, listen to and remember the sounds and the sequence they are in, and talk about them (thereby developing their vocabulary and language comprehension). Phonemic awareness is an auditory skill;

children do not need to know letter shapes and sounds (phonics) in order to develop basic phonemic awareness but as children develop an understanding of the sounds that letter symbols make, phonemic awareness and phonics are often practised simultaneously.

Phonological awareness is the understanding of different ways that oral language can be divided into smaller components – sentences into words and words into syllables and individual sounds. It includes a basic child level understanding of the structure of the language. Without some phonological awareness, children will not understand how words from spoken language have sound segments that can be represented in print and can be sounded out in print.

The way in which the teacher interacts with the children and talks with them is crucial in developing their speaking and awareness of the language they are listening to.

The Alphabetic Principle

Although children may previously have learned to recognise the letters of the alphabet and give their names, the alphabetic principle refers to the linking of the letter to the corresponding sound in speech. The children have to learn that writing – print – represents these sounds, or phonemes. Then they have to develop the understanding that the letters on the page—the *b,* the *a*, and the *t*—represent these units of sound. This is normally done sequentially, with the sounds of the letters most commonly used in the texts children will read first. One begins with letter-sound correspondences that can be combined to make words that the learners can read and understand.

These sound-letter links should be taught explicitly and systematically. Most letter-sound correspondences can be taught in the space of a few months at the start of Grade 1. This means that the children can read many of the unfamiliar words they meet in text for themselves, without the assistance of the teacher.

This is also where there are significant difference between English and the other South African languages. Only some of the letters represent the same sounds in all the languages (d*, f, h, k, l, m, n, s*, and *z* for instance). The African languages have transparent or shallow orthographies because of the nearly one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds (graphemes to phonemes). All word are decodable and have a clearly defined syllable structure. The primary processing unit is the syllable. All syllables are open (Consonant Vowel (CV) or Consonant Consonant Vowel (CCV)).

By contrast English has an opaque or deep orthography because there is not a consistent correspondence between letters and sounds. Some words are not easily decodable. There are 44 phonemes in English but the alphabet has only 26 letters to represent all these sounds. English syllables are primarily closed (CVC) and it is often unclear to which syllable the consonant belongs. The import of this is that English is a harder language to decode and children take longer to become proficient in decoding and word recognition.

Phonics

Phonics is the bringing together of the knowledge of letter shapes, knowing that written words are built up from letters and letter groups (syllables and consonant clusters) and word parts (prefixes, infixes, suffixes, roots and base words) and that they represent sound values in the language and can be blended together to make words. To recognise words, children need to learn not only the connections between phonemes and graphemes (the letters or letter combinations that represent phonemes), but also the spelling patterns for syllables from which longer words are constructed. As they progress they come to decode digraphs, trigraphs, vowel teams, blends, word families, inflections, roots and affixes. This set of phonics skills enables text to be decoded.

The teacher needs to be familiar with a range of methods and techniques for teaching phonics. There are many phonics programmes following slightly different approaches and some schools use them. The Department of Basic Education Grade 1 and Grade 2 workbooks also provide a simple basic phonics informed approach. There are also a host of resource materials in English for teaching decoding. The value of such programmes is that they provide the necessary details for dealing with particular sound-letter combinations and word components at particular school grade levels and make use of simultaneous visual, auditory and kinaesthetic activities.

Synthetic phonics programmes teach grapheme-phoneme correspondences individually and in a specified sequence, and children are taught early to blend (*synthesize*, hence the term *synthetic*) individual phonemes together to make words. In contrast, analytic phonics programmes begin with whole words, and grapheme-phoneme correspondences are taught by breaking those words down into their component parts. The synthetic phonics approach seems to have some clear advantages over the analytic phonics approach.

Phonics and its outcome, successful decoding of words in a text, has, of course to be followed by word and sentence reading skills so that the "sounding out" of the decoding stage can move on to the beginning of meaningful reading – it "makes sense".

Note that the sensible selection of a small number of high frequency, difficult to decode sight words has its place in early reading in English.

Automaticity

With regular practice children gain more knowledge of letter-sound correspondences and word components, more rapidly blend letters together into words and rapidly recognise word patterns. After a time the process of reading becomes **automatic** – they have **automatic word recognition** – and now they can really devote mental attention to the meaning of the texts they are reading. At this stage they begin to be **fluent** readers (i.e., they can read orally at a good pace, accurately and with proper expression). They are able to decode words they have not seen before. Fluency is one of several critical factors necessary for reading comprehension.

Automatic and accurate **word recognition** is important because it enables learners to distinguish different words from each other and to focus on the meaning of what is being read. Teachers need to understand that when children start to learn to read,

word recognition is a slow, halting, conscious and often effortful process. Through practice it becomes increasingly accurate and speeds up. Note that children need to be able to identify most of the words in a text if they are going to comprehend it.

It is important for the teacher to understand why automaticity is crucial for comprehending texts. Human beings have limited short-term memory capacity (a sort of rule of thumb is that we can only keep about seven items in our short term memory at once). If one reads very slowly, sounding out each letter and word (as is the case for the person starting to learn decoding skills) by the time you get to the end of the sentence, what you read at the beginning of the sentence has dropped out of your short-term memory – and therefore you cannot really make sense of the text nor relate it to your existing long-term memory store of background information. You will not have enough working memory to actually comprehend what you are reading.

If children are taught reading in their home language systematically and explicitly (and at the same time motivated through pleasurable activities, hearing good books and gaining meaning from what they read) nearly all children (whatever their socio-economic background) should be able to read at an acceptable level of **fluency** at the end of Grade 1 in the African languages (where the correspondence between sounds and letters is regular), but often after a somewhat longer period in English.

Generally it is not a good idea to teach children to use context to read the words on the page: children who read well do not need to use context as an aid to word recognition. (An exception here is using contextual clues within the text where lack of tone markers in African language orthographies may require it.)

Assessing decoding skills

Decoding skills need to be regularly assessed and progress monitored. There are a huge range of tests, exercises and benchmarks for decoding in English but few available in the African languages. Generally, one-to-one assessment by the teacher with each child is the most effective way of monitoring the development of phonic skills and reading.

Explicit, measurable goals by grade level for oral reading fluency (ORF) and related subskills are needed with the criteria established by research. Rereading, partner reading, and reading with a model are validated techniques.

Decoding across the grades

Teachers need to gain a developmental perspective on these phonic components, and must be shown how to adapt their teaching emphasis across the grades.

The alphabet and the most common sound-spelling for each letter should be taught in Grade R or early in Grade 1. In Grade 1, the majority of the phonics skills should be formally taught.

The focus of instruction in Grades 2 and 3 is to consolidate learners' phonics skills. That includes attention to fluency with basic sound-spellings taught in Grade 1, and the

decoding of longer and more complex words. Above Grade 3, the focus of instruction should be on multisyllabic words. In English children need to have formal instruction on the six syllable types, prefixes, suffixes, and Greek and Latin roots.

Teaching phonics is not enough. Decoding skills are not all that is required for teaching reading, they are just one component of teaching reading. Decoding is a means to an end, developing good comprehension.

Teachers need to be able to develop these skills in both home and additional languages, develop skill in each of the decoding components, know how to use assessment guidelines and rubrics and know what norms and benchmarks to apply in both home and additional languages.

Decoding in African languages, Afrikaans and English

Because African languages are strongly syllabic, the Roman alphabet is not ideal for representing the syllables as it uses two letters (or more) for each one sound syllable. These languages have a general Consonant – Vowel syllable pattern, e.g. *ngu*- and *ba*-. Hence learners need to understand the letter-sound relations within syllables, and how to blend sounds to form syllables, and how to blend syllables to form words.

The Nguni languages have both an agglutinative structure and a conjoined writing structure which makes the words long and complex. These complex words are composed of word stems and affixes, and readers must register the meaning of the stem and note its modification by each affix. For example, in the isiZulu word '*asimthandazele*' (let us pray for him/her) readers must recognise the five morphemes (*a/si/m/thandaz/ele*) – a stem preceded by three affixes and succeeded by another. A change of one letter in one affix changes the meaning, (e.g,. *animthandazele* = you (plural) should pray for him/her). The implications of this for teachers of reading are that learners must rapidly perceive shifts in arrangements of morphemes, and the concomitant shifts in meaning of the word. Exercises designed to develop readers' ability to instantly recognise high frequency non-agglutinated short words and high frequency word forms with only two or three morphemes would be equally useful.

Tone modifies meaning in spoken African languages but there are no tone markers in the written script. For example, in isiZulu, -*nga*- can have a negating effect in a low tone, but indicates potential in a high tone. '*Lomntwana angajovwa*' if *nga*- is low tonedthe meaning is 'This child **must not** be vaccinated' but, if *nga*- is high toned means "This child **may be** vaccinated". Therefore, readers must either hold alternate meanings in mind where there is ambiguity until they confirm meaning from contextual cues, or reread phrases to decide on their meaning. The implication for educators here is that they must teach readers to find contextual cues within the text which would help them decide on the appropriate tone and the consequent meaning of the word.

Because of its conjunctive writing system and complex consonant sounds, it is very difficult to read Nguni words fluently if learners do not know their letter-sounds and how to blend them, so a strong phonics foundation must be laid in Grade 1. The orthography is relatively time consuming to read in comparison with other alphabetic languages for which data is available.

Finally, especially in comparison with English, African languages tend to have a lower number of permissible letter combinations, partly because of the ConsonantVowel (CV) syllable structure, and partly because there are no contiguous vowels or double consonants. Short letter strings such as *zi, ku, ka,* or *nga*, recur frequently, either as distinct morphemes or parts of larger morphemes, with different meanings in different contexts. In a comparison with English letter strings these letter strings appear much more frequently in African language texts. One effect of this is that words are not as visually distinct from one another in African languages as they are in English.

Decoding in Afrikaans is fairly straightforward as there is a consistent correspondence between letters and sounds.

English has 44 phonemes in English but the alphabet has only 26 letters to represent all these sounds. The makes English is a harder language to decode and children take longer to become proficient in decoding and word recognition. However, many of the "irregularities" in the English sound-letter representation obey certain rules that owe their origin to the different language sources (British, Anglo-Saxon, Latin, Greek, Norse, etc.) in the evolution of the English language.

Some of the most common English words are hard to decode phonetically – such as "the" and should be learned as sight words.

About half of all English words have a regular sound-symbol correspondences, about a third have only one irregularity (usually of a vowel). Only about 4% are truly irregular.

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3 Vocabulary

[Standards: K5, K11, K12, K16]

Oral and written vocabularies
Importance of reading in vocabulary development
The reciprocal relationship between vocabulary and reading
Explicit instruction on vocabulary
Word learning strategies
Planning vocabulary development
BICS and CALP vocabularies
Assessing vocabulary knowledge
Vocabulary resources
Special issues in African languages and English

Vocabulary learning enhances all aspects of oral language and reading and writing proficiency. A broad vocabulary strengthens precise communication, particularly in writing. It also improves general knowledge. Learners who know more words are likely to be better at what they do and be more self-confident.

As children read, they come across new words that they may not have been exposed to in their oral language. In order for reading comprehension to occur, children must have word knowledge, or vocabulary, in addition to reasoning skills. The development of a growing vocabulary happens through oral language practice, by explicit instruction, and by reading itself.

The relationship between oral and written vocabularies

Student teachers need to be able to explain the reciprocal relationship between spoken language and written language and why and how both oral and written vocabularies have to be developed in primary schooling. They have to understand the complex relationship between oral language proficiency, vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, and reading comprehension.

The number of words used in nearly all oral speech (child or adult) is quite low – probably about 400 to 600 words. Most children's books have a richer vocabulary than most adult speech or the speech on the television programmes that children watch.

Another thing to note is that we usually understand many more words than we actually use (this is our **passive vocabulary**). Our **active vocabulary** is the words we actually use in speech (or writing). A similar distinction is made between our receptive vocabulary (all the words I hear or read that I recognize and understand the meaning of) and productive vocabulary (words I can say or write in a grammatically acceptable way).

It is important that teachers also understand that children enter school knowing varying numbers of words. Estimates are given of linguistically advantaged children

entering into Grade 1 knowing two to four times the number of words than linguistically disadvantaged children know. The variance comes from growing up in different family and community environments. Children who come from poor communities typically have smaller vocabularies than children who come from wealthier homes. (Children whose parents give books to their pre-school children and read story books to them will have larger vocabularies.)

If learners hope to access post-secondary study they have to enormously enlarge their vocabularies – probably to at least 20 000 words. There are also words that are necessary to make critical distinctions in the physical and social worlds in which we live. Without word knowledge tools, one will be severely disadvantaged in attaining one's goals in an advanced modern society.

Building a larger vocabulary is done partly by explicit instruction in school. But the number of new words learned in such a way is relatively small – about 400 a year. Most vocabulary development can only come from reading. Learners have to know how to read fluently to continue to grow their vocabulary at the rate that is necessary. When they find new words in texts, they have to have the means to find out their meaning.

The importance of reading in vocabulary development

The only opportunities to acquire new words occur when an individual is exposed to these new words in written texts or oral language that is outside his or her current vocabulary. A consistent finding related to vocabulary learning is that children need multiple exposures to a new word in meaningful contexts to learn it well. This will happen much more often while reading than while talking or watching television. (This reinforces again the vital importance of early fluency in reading). Indeed, most vocabulary development takes place outside of explicit instruction. There is thus a clear reciprocal relationship between vocabulary and reading development.

The amount of time devoted to reading **out** of school is probably the most important indicator of who will prosper in later life: cognitively, socially and economically.

Explicit instruction on vocabulary

Teachers need to be able to teach vocabulary. Direct vocabulary instruction may be particularly important for learners with weak oral language skills who lack the proper foundation for easily acquiring new words.

Vocabulary is often taught through giving list of words for children to learn each day, discussing their meanings, and checking the spelling thereof. Children should be explicitly taught specific words selected from texts that they are reading. The teacher can pre-teach new words that will appear in the text or, during readings, ask questions to help determine the meaning of a word as it is used in the context of the story. Instruction that engages learners in active analysis of word meanings is more effective in promoting learning than instruction that only has learners relate words to their own background knowledge and personal experiences.

Vocabulary can be taught as part of comprehension. Vocabulary is necessary for comprehension – unless one understands 95 percent of the words in a text one is unlikely to make sense of it. Reading comprehension depends heavily on knowledge of the individual word meanings in a text, and these meanings are learned by repeated exposure to a word's use in context and by explicit, direct instruction in word meanings.

Teaching word learning strategies

It is impossible to provide specific instruction for all the words that children do not know. Learners need to be able to determine the meaning of words that are new to them but are not taught directly. They need to develop effective word-learning strategies for the following four types of new word learning:

- Learning the meaning for a new word representing a known concept
- Clarifying and enriching the meaning of a known word
- Learning a new meaning for a known word
- Learning the meaning of a new word representing an unknown concept.

So, in addition to specific word instruction, children should be taught word-learning strategies that they can use on their own (which they need because most vocabulary development will come from their own individual reading). Children need to be able to know and apply grade appropriate phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words and finding out their meaning.

Teachers need to know the following strategies and help children practise them:

Using information about meaningful word parts (morphology) to work out the meanings of words in a text

Morphology should be taught in the context of rich vocabulary instruction. The important word parts should be explained systematically with opportunities for reteaching and practice. Learners need to be able to determine a word's meaning based on its roots. However, explicit instruction on morphology should be situated in meaningful contexts.

It can help to teach words in their morphological and semantic families. Teach words that are arranged by the morphological or semantic similarities and differences.

Using dictionaries and other reference works to learn word meanings and to deepen knowledge of word meanings

Student teachers must know how to teach children to look up words in a dictionary (and know alphabetic order). For primary school use it is best to use dictionaries that have a limited defining vocabulary.

Using context clues in the text or illustrations in the text

Using general and more specialised background knowledge clues from outside the text

Planning for vocabulary development

An organised teacher has to plan for vocabulary development across a year and teachers have to plan for development across phases in both home language and additional language. This planning will have to take into account the reading texts and workbooks that are available in the school or obtainable elsewhere.

It is not necessary for children to learn simple words first. Nor does direct vocabulary instruction need to wait until children have learned to read well enough to fluently decode the words they are learning.

In planning what words to teach explicitly the teacher can make use of the words in the readers or other texts the children use and can also use lists of the most common high-frequency words used in texts in the particular language. There are common word lists available for most languages. Some of these words are so-called sight words, a term applied in early reading instruction in English to the set of high frequency words that have irregular spelling patterns and that must be memorized by sight. The only way to 'read' these words is to identify them as sight words having memorising their correct pronunciation. Good examples are "the", "was", "as", "it", "said" , "eye", "knock" and "island" which cannot be sounded out using basic phonics knowledge and often cannot The sight words are a collection of words that a child should learn to recognise without sounding out the letters.

BICS and CALP vocabularies

The teaching of a set of "school" or "academic" words is also important. School going children have to demonstrate what is called "Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency" (CALP) as distinct from the language of the everyday "Basic Interpersonal Communication" (BICS). These academic words mainly appear in written texts and are increasingly necessary for the literacy practices engaged in school study as children advance through the grades. They include general school/academic words and terms that appear frequently in most subjects, and literary vocabulary that appears in literature but not much in everyday life.

Assessing vocabulary knowledge

The teacher should know what learners need to be able to read and write within and across the relevant grades and subjects. The teacher also needs to know how to assess the learners' progress in doing so.

Vocabulary resources

Word lists

Teachers need to know how and where to access lists of grade appropriate high frequency words, high frequency cross-subject content words and academic words that they can teach and use in class. Many of these words need to be explicitly taught especially to struggling readers and EFAL learners.

Dictionaries, glossaries and thesauri

Teachers should know how to teach dictionary use and to recommend so-called learners' dictionaries which use a restricted defining vocabulary. The most useful dictionaries include example sentences of word meanings in context, particularly when the same word has several meanings. Teachers should also be familiar with print and online visual dictionaries. Glossaries and thesauri can be used to broaden and deepen learners' knowledge of words in the Senior Phase.

Special issues related to specific language vocabularies

The teacher needs to recognise that different languages have different word forms. In African agglutinating languages one has to know the word stem and how it is joined to, and its meaning altered by, a complex system of prefixes, infixes and suffixes. English and Afrikaans, by contrast are analytic languages with words standing on their own.

Special issues related to English vocabulary

Apart from the general need to build up English vocabulary, the teacher needs to pay special attention to the learning and spelling of words with similar sounds but different spelling patterns. Being able to spell words when writing is more difficult in English because of its complex spelling rules. In the African languages and Afrikaans it is much easier to code words in writing.

Although English is commonly described as having irregular spelling, many of the "irregularities" obey certain rules that owe their origin to the different language sources (British, Anglo-Saxon, Latin, Greek, Norse, etc.) in the evolution of the English language. About 60% of all English words have Latin or Greek origins.

Knowledge of irregular spelling patterns helps learners to read new words. For example:

- When a vowel is followed by *r*, the two sounds are tied together. The /är/ sound in dark is usually spelled *ar*. Two common spellings for the /ôr/ sound in store are *or* and *ore*.
- The vowel + *r* sound in *n**ur**se* can be spelled *ur*, *or*, *ir*, or *er*. The learner may need to check a dictionary if they are not sure how to spell a word with this sound.
- The consonant sound /j/ can be spelled *j*, but it can also be spelled *g* if it is followed by *e* or *i*.
- The consonant sound /s/ can be spelled *c* when it is followed by either *e* or *i*.

To understand these English spelling complexities teachers need to have some understanding of the **morphology** of the English language and that meaningful word parts include base words and word roots, and affixes (prefixes and suffixes but no infixes), base words, and root words can help learners grasp the meanings of many new words.

Base words are words that are not derived from other words. They are the word from which many other words are formed. For example, many words can be formed from the base word *migrate*: *migration*, *migrant*, *immigration*, *immigrant*, *migrating*, and *migratory*.

Affixes are word units that are "fixed to" either the beginnings of words (prefixes) or inside words (infixes) or the ending of words (suffixes). English does not have infixes, Bantu languages do. The word *disrespectful* has two affixes, a prefix (*dis*-) and a suffix (-*ful*). Explicitly teaching the definitions and parts of speech for affixes dramatically enhances a learner's vocabulary. For example, teaching that *dis*- can mean "not" or "opposite of" makes it easier to remember the meanings of *disrespect, dishonourable, etc.*

If learners know the four most common **prefixes** in English (*un*-, *re*-, *in*-, *dis*-), they will have important clues about the meaning of about two thirds of all English words that have prefixes. Prefixes are relatively easy to learn because they have clear meanings (for example, *un*- means "*not*" and *re*- means "*again*"); they are usually spelled the same way from word to word.

Suffixes are divided into two categories:

- **Inflectional** suffixes minimally change the meaning of the base word. Examples of inflectional suffixes are -*ing*, -*ed*, and -*s* or -*es*. The meaning difference between *walk* and *walked* is minimal. *Walk* and *walked* are similar enough that learners can easily understand the difference. Inflectional endings are easily taught to younger learners.
- **Derivational suffixes** change the meaning of the base or root word. Examples of derivational suffixes are -*tion*, -*ous*, -*ite*, and -*or*. The meaning difference between *govern* and *governor* is significant. The part of speech changes from a verb ("to govern") to a noun ("one who governs").

Learning suffixes can be difficult. This is because some suffixes have more abstract meanings than prefixes.

Word roots are the words from other languages such as Latin or Greek that are the origin of many English words. They are frequently found in content-area school subjects, especially in the sciences and social studies. Teachers should teach the more common root words that learners are likely to see often and teach other word roots as they occur in the textbooks.

A note on grammar

Grammar instruction can be presented in a meaningful and helpful way. Knowing how nouns can be derived from verbs, recognising when a verb is in the present or past tense, understanding how conjunctives link thought units can deepen meaning and understanding. In African languages, morphology and grammar are deeply intertwined and even Foundation Phase teachers need to know something about this formally, even if they don't teach it directly.

4 Fluency

[Standards: K14, P3, P5]

Components of fluency
Assessing fluency

A **fluent** reader is able to read a connected text orally at a good pace, accurately and with proper expression. They are able to decode the familiar words in the text automatically and they are able to decode words they have not seen before.

Although the terms automaticity and fluency often are used interchangeably, they are not the same thing. Automaticity is necessary for reading fluency but is only one required enabler of fluency.

If children are taught reading in their home language systematically and explicitly (and at the same time motivated through pleasurable activities, hearing good books and gaining meaning from what they read) nearly all children (whatever their socio-economic background) should be able to read at an acceptable level of **fluency** at the end of Grade 1 in the African languages (where the correspondence between sounds and letters is regular), but often after a somewhat longer period in English.

Fluency is one of several critical factors necessary for successful reading comprehension. Indeed, it is one of the most common, reliable and valid indicators of general reading achievement, including reading comprehension. As learners progress across the grades, fluency practice should increasingly focus on the strategic integration of decoding, fluency, and comprehension tasks. Once learners have become fluent readers they can make the transition for basic 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn'.

Components of fluency

Decoding – the learner has to be able to decode the words with a high degree of automacity except to difficult unknown words

Prosody – the use of expression and phrasing when reading aloud should be such that:

- there is vocal emphasis on appropriate words and phrases
- the reader's voice rise and falls at appropriate points in the text
- the readers inflexion reflects the punctuation in the text
- the reader pauses in harmony with the punctuation and conjunctions
- for narrative text the appropriate tone is used to represent the characters' mental states such as anger, joy, sadness, fear.

Accuracy – decoding and prosody should have a high degree of accuracy

Speed – the speed at which the passage is read should be appropriate.

Assessing fluency

Reading fluency tasks should be used for monitoring the progress of individual learners and for identifying learners who are experiencing reading difficulties.

There are various guidelines and rubrics for assessing **oral reading fluency** (ORF). ORF refers to how fast and accurately learners read aloud, and whether they read with natural expression, paying attention to punctuation and to the natural pauses in sentences and phrases. Words correct per minute thresholds for adequate oral reading fluency for primary school grades have been well established by research (for English) (Hasbrouc and Tindal, 2017) and are being developed for African languages (Spaull and Pretorius, 2015). The short texts which are used for checking reading fluency should be ones that are at the appropriate reading level and which learners nearly 100 per cent accurately reading on their own after they have had sufficient deliberate practice reading such texts and received feedback from the teacher on their reading.

Typical categorisations of fluency for beginning readers usually have something like the following:

Non fluent	Level 1	Reads primarily word-by-word. Occasional two-word or three-word phrases may be read but this is not done frequent and/or they do not preserve meaningful syntax.
Non fluent	Level 2	Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three- or four-word phrases and some word-by-word reading may still be present. Word groupings may seem awkward and unrelated to the larger context of the sentence or passage
Semi fluent	Level 3	Reads primarily in three- or four-word phrase groups. Some small groupings may be present. however, the majority of phrasing is appropriate and preserves the syntax of the writer. Little or no expressive interpretation is present.
Fluent	Level 4	Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions, and deviations from text may be present, these do not detract from the overall structure of the story. Preservation of the writer's syntax is consistent. Most of the story is read with expressive interpretation.

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5 Comprehension

[Standards: K8, K13, K17, K20]

Components and types of comprehension
Teaching comprehension
Critical thinking and literacy

Reading comprehension, the understanding of the meaning of texts and integrating that with what the reader already knows, is the end product of the reading process. It is the result of the interaction of two sets of activities: word recognition and language comprehension. Decoding and vocabulary enable word recognition, Language comprehension enables the reader to construct the overall meaning of the text using the clues and cues provided by the word recognition. Reading is thus more than sounding out the printed letters in a text and more than knowing the meanings of individual words in a text. It also requires the readers' capacity to use their background knowledge and powers of reason to make sense of what they read.

The ability to comprehend the meaning of texts develops along a continuum that is in effect lifelong, as our vocabulary grows and our background knowledge also expands. Much of this growth cannot be formally taught (for example, there is simply not enough time for a large vocabulary to be taught – it can only grow through the individual's independent reading). However, as with vocabulary, what can be taught are effective strategies, methods and techniques that the individual reader can then use.

Real attention has to be given to teaching comprehension (not just the assessment of meaningful reading but also how the development of comprehension is taught and scaffolded). Means of monitoring comprehension are necessary.

Components and types of comprehension

Comprehension is a multi-faceted activity and there are various ways of characterising these activities.

The following lists some of the more common ways of looking at comprehension.

Lexical decoding and understanding of language structures

Good word-level skills allow learners to identify, or decode, words in texts accurately and fluently. The relationship between print and speech is understood and there is knowledge of language structures (word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), grammatical functions in sentences (subject-verb-object), grammatical constructions (subject-verb agreement/concordial agreement), syntax (word order and the relationship between words and sentences), and lexical semantics (the analysis of word meanings and relations between them).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary knowledge and oral language skills help readers understand the meaning of words and connected text. Instruction in this area involves strategies to build vocabulary and activities to strengthen listening comprehension. For reading for academic purposes learners have to know typical academic discourse words and text structure signal words (e.g. *because*, *however*, *by contrast*, *as a result*, that point to whether the text or portion of the text is description, a sequence, a comparison or contrast, a problem with a solution, or information about a cause and its effect).

Genre and rhetorical structure

Understanding what type of text it is aids comprehension (and also enables quicker linking to one's background knowledge). The various types of texts (messages, stories, poems, informational texts, etc.) and the different forms of narrative texts (stories, traditional tales, mystery, science fiction, romance, adventure, etc.) and types of speech in the text (e.g. description, assertions, questions, commands, requests, figurative language) also need to be understood. Knowledge of the rhetorical relationship of the ideas (What is the main idea? What are the other ideas? What are the details?) helps readers with their comprehension of the expository texts. Different comprehension strategies are required for different genres.

Teachers need to know how to use the many checklists and schedules that can be used with learners to 'process' a book (looking at such things as the purpose of the book, relating one's previous knowledge and vocabulary related to the topic, identifying title and author, making predictions of the books contents, skimming the text, layout, structure and organisation, the writer's purpose, etc.).

Background knowledge

Background knowledge includes not only general knowledge of the world but also knowledge drawn from science, social studies, and other disciplines. Good teaching in the various school subjects can help learners develop the background that is necessary for good reading comprehension, though the bulk of learners' background knowledge will have to come from their own reading.

Situation

Comprehension of the situation conveyed in a text is needed. Questions such as Who are the agents? What are the objects? Where is it taking place? Over what time and in what sequence? What causes what? What are the actors' intentions, etc., can assist with this.

Pragmatics

This refers to the goals of the author and reader and the attitudes and beliefs (shown by the author (humour, sarcasm, irony, detachment, polemic, etc.).

Thinking and reasoning skills (logical semantics)

These are involved in making the inferences that are essential in reading and comprehending more complex texts and where the learner is expected to carry out a thoughtful analysis of the meaning of the text. These skills include the following types of understanding and activities:

Literal (the ability to identify information explicitly stated in a text)

Visualize (create mental images supported by the five senses)

Make connections and applications (retrieve and activate prior knowledge in order to connect to own life, other texts, and the world)

Predict and question (make predictions and pose questions before, during, and after reading)

Analyse (break the text into its parts in order to understand the whole)

Criticise (think about the information and evaluate the information, actions, style, etc. presented for their truth or falsity or good and bad points)

Determine importance (the theoretical or practical importance of what is read)

Infer (use a set of logical steps to use information explicitly stated in the text to draw logical conclusions either through deduction (deriving logical conclusions from premises known or assumed to be true), induction (inference from particular premises to a universal conclusion) and abduction (from a single or set of observations formulating the simplest and most likely explanation for the observations))

Synthesize (put together information from the text, the context and background knowledge into a new whole)

Evaluate (analyse and make judgements about what is read)

Affective knowledge

Our feelings, values and beliefs all affect our emotional response to texts and how we comprehend them.

Monitoring and correcting

Continually checking whether what is read makes sense and how it is making sense is a vital part of comprehension. Readers need to be aware of what they do and do not understand so that they can use appropriate strategies to resolve problems in comprehension.

Motivation to understand and work toward academic goals

The motivation to read whether for information or pleasure is a vital part of comprehension as comprehending a text requires active mental effort. Readers who are interested in what they are doing are more likely to apply strategies to improve their reading comprehension.

Teaching comprehension

Comprehension skills can be taught, modelled and practised in a planned progression.

Teachers need to teach comprehension in a classroom environment that emphasizes reading and writing as meaning-making processes. Teaching reading comprehension strategies must include emphasis on comprehension as being the way of reaching desirable reading goals.

Comprehension is important in all school grades, though of course in the higher grades it gets more complex and makes more and more use of higher order thinking skills that support making inferences from texts and evaluating them.

Modelling or 'thinking aloud' about the strategy being taught is important.

One major strategy is to provide explicit instruction in processes such as previewing and reading with a purpose, describing story structure, paraphrasing, summarizing, retelling, asking questions during reading, constructing visual images while reading, making diagrams (graphic organisers), making inferences, and monitoring one's own comprehension.

Another major strategy is for the teacher to question in an appropriate style. The questions should check to see that the learner understands the content words and what they refer to, connecting and signal words, and the relationships between individual sentences and the topic at hand, and about what the author intended and the implications of this.

When well instructed through teaching and regularly practised, these comprehension skills become automatic habits of thought in a good reader.

Comprehension problems should be diagnosed and dealt with as early as possible. The failure to comprehend and draw inferences lead to failure in reading and in academic achievement in all subjects.

Critical thinking and literacy

Most approaches to developing comprehension share the ideal that full literacy requires readers of texts to adopt a critical and questioning approach – in other words readers should also be critical thinkers. A critical thinker reading a text asks appropriate questions, sorts through the text for information and evidence, including silences and biases, relates it to previous knowledge, reexamines his or her own beliefs, assumptions and ideological views, reasons logically and draws sound conclusions. A range of cognitive skill are needed to do this – understanding, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, monitoring own reasoning, etc. Critical thinking is increasingly referred to as a key 21st Century competency.

6 Writing

[Standards: K6, K7, K8, K18, K19, K20]

Functions of writing in society and school
Teaching handwriting
Teaching writing
Teaching spelling
Teaching sentence and paragraph construction
Writing genres
Making multimodal texts
The writing friendly classroom

The functions of writing in society and schooling

Learners need to understand the reciprocal relationship between spoken and written language and that writing is a form of meaningful communication that will be increasingly important in their school careers and in their whole life. After learning to read and write in the Foundation Phase they will be 'writing to learn' and writing to document that learning. Most of their future assessment will be done on the basis of what they write. Writing is where the learners' imagination and creativity is shown.

Teaching handwriting

Handwriting has to be taught and it is important to get it right at the beginning with such things as how to hold the pencil or pen efficiently (including for children who are left handed) and the best writing position. The teacher has to choose and teach an appropriate early handwriting print script that is easily transformed into a cursive script (e.g. that adopted by the South Australian Department of Education (Goves, 2006)). Because handwriting is a motor skill, it works best to practice in multiple short sessions. Learners also should apply their handwriting skills at the word, sentence and whole text levels and in authentic writing activities.

With the increasing use of digital equipment in schools such as tablets, smartphones and computers, basic keyboarding skills should also be taught (and for which learners have to be able to recognise all the letters of the alphabet (including in capital letters)). In the higher school grades the use of wordprocessor programs and other text design software may become important in digitally equipped schools.

Teaching writing

Research indicates that writing down language – the act of systematically constructing phoneme-grapheme correspondences – has many challenges and that learners benefit from systematic instruction. Children have to be taught grammar (at the appropriate time – not in Grades 1 and 2), handwriting, spelling, punctuation, along with many structured opportunities to practise the composition of texts of various types. The student teacher has to be able to teach:

Basic writing skills: These are the 'mechanics' of writing and include handwriting/ keyboarding, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure (e.g., elimination of run-ons and sentence fragments).

Basic text creation: This means encoding what one wants to say into text through choosing words, putting them together in intelligible well punctuated sentences, and with practice, elaborating on the detail and expressing one's thoughts more clearly and clarity of expression.

Intermediate writing skills: Here learners have to develop more complex, structured texts with good paragraphing, introduction and conclusion (in accordance with the various types, formats and genres of writing, and various writing conventions. Writing now involves planning, revising, editing their own work, and producing a finished text. These processes become more important as learners advance through the grades.

Advanced writing knowledge and skills: Writing knowledge includes an understanding of discourse and genre and how writing has to convey its meaning clearly and appropriately for different recipients. They also have to pay attention to the layout, colour and image choice of print and digital texts.

Teaching spelling

Teachers who teach spelling need understanding of the language, the speech sounds in the language, how sounds are used to form words, the way that these sounds interact with one another and how words are organised and used in the language.

They need to know how letters of the alphabet, individually or in combinations, represent vowels and consonants and syllables (English rules for this being particularly complex). They need to know which groups of letters form regular patterns, for example the common syllables in African languages, and in English the CVC (Consonant/Vowel/ Consonant) pattern to form short vowels or CVCe/CVVC patterns to form long vowels.

At the beginning stages of spelling development (particularly in English), phonetic or "invented" spelling (which may make use of the letter names they have learned) can play an important role in helping children learn how to write. When children use phonetic spelling, they are applying their growing knowledge of phonemes and letters, and developing their confidence in the alphabetic principle. (This applies mainly to English with its spelling irregularities. African languages, with the phonetic regularity where letters consistently stand for the same sounds in a one-to-one relation, are less helped by invented spelling.) However, explicit teaching of conventional spelling from the earliest grades is also very important. Without explicit instruction, most children will not simply infer the correct spelling of all the words they need to learn in order to write well.

Morphological knowledge (what the meaningful units are within words, how they can be combined, and how they are spelled) is also important in spelling. This includes knowing about roots and bases, affixes (prefixes, infixes (in African languages) and suffixes).

Morphemic spelling rules govern the formation of plurals and joining syllables and vowels. Morphological changes are also important in African languages in that they influence phonological changes in the written form of language, e.g. in the coalescence and elision of vowels, e.g. in isiZulu *abantwana*, which comes from *aba + ntu + ana,* the */a/* and */u/* undergo a process of vowel coalescence, and it becomes a /w/.

In English spelling, many of the words that seem "irregular" (based on phonemic spelling rules) actually preserve the morphemes as they were in the source language (e.g., 'ch' sounds like /ch/ in Anglo-Saxon words like *check*, /sh/ in French words like *niche*, and /k/ in Greek words like *chaos*).

Student teachers need to be taught how to explicitly teach learners to learn and remember the spellings of the words. This can be accomplished through:

- **explicit instruction** in phoneme-grapheme correspondences, phonemic patterns in letter sequences or syllables, rules for joining syllables or adding morphemes, elements of morpheme preservation in word formation, and strategies for encoding irregular words;
- **careful selection of spelling words** that capitalize on learners' developing knowledge of the underlying structures of words (and there are useful word lists available, though not yet in all languages); and
- **repeated and cumulative practice** in coordinating phonemic, orthographic, and morphemic knowledge with immediate error correction.

Reading and spelling should be linked together because this creates opportunities to practice applying common patterns. Instruction in writing about texts learners have heard read or read themselves is more effective than only receiving instruction in reading, reading and studying, or reading and only discussing the text. Spelling has a final verification stage where the speller reads back the written word to make sure it looks and sounds correct.

Teaching sentence and paragraph construction

How children gain competence in building sentences, paragraphs and full texts is influenced by guidance and regular practice in writing. Guidance should be given on generating ideas and content for writing, word choice, writing fluent sentences, combing sentences, organizing paragraphs and sets of paragraphs, obeying writing conventions, and voice. Varying forms of text scaffolding can be provided.

Writing genres

Writing genres are the various forms of written text, whether prose, poetry, or drama, that are distinguished by shared literary conventions, formats, styles, etc. Genres and text types are categorised in many different ways from simple sets such as messages, letters, stories, myths, folktales, poems, drama, novels and informational texts both fiction and non-fiction, to more complex ones. The common non-fiction genres include biography, essay, instructional manual, newspaper or magazine, memoir, report, narrative account, textbook, reference book, speech transcript, academic dissertation

or thesis. There are many variants of fiction genres. It is important, even in the Foundation Phase that learners are alerted to the different types of texts and have practice in writing in different genres such as messages, stories, poems, lists, etc.

Making multimodal texts

Though the dawn of the paperless society is constantly delayed, even young learners have to be introduced to the realities of the digital communication environment in which information is communicated through webpages and computer programmes (such as Microsoft Powerpoint and equivalent presentation software) and mobile phone applications (such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram and so forth) which have their own conventions.

The writing friendly classroom

Teachers should be able to model how the ability to write affects one's daily life, that it is a vital form of communication, but also that it takes time and perseverance to write meaningful text. They can demonstrate how they do their writing, saying out loud the process of composition they are going through.

Children need to be given choices in what they write and to be able to "publish" it in the classroom (and receive responses to it). They can also be encouraged to collaborate in editing each others' work and in developing longer or more complex texts.

References

Goves, G. (Ed.). 2006. ***Handwriting in the South Australian curriculum.*** Second edition. Adelaide, South Australia: Department of Education and Children's Services

7 Motivation and response in literacy

[Standards: K5, K6, K8, K9, K18, K20, **K21**, P4, P6, E5, E6, F5, F6]

Interests, attitudes and motivation in reading
Motivating children to read
Response in reading
Motivation and response in relation to genres
Reading for information and pleasure
The literacy teacher as a role model
The literacy environment

A coherent philosophy about the teaching of reading and writing should include attention to issues relating to the affective side of learning to read and write. The child's emotional engagement and motivations are particularly important, especially when reading fluency is still to be developed.

Generally, it is important that teachers make explicit to learners the purpose and functions of what is being taught, i.e. why they are working hard at reading and writing. They also need to make the process of becoming literate engaging and pleasurable.

Interests, attitudes and motivation in reading

There are a variety of factors that can influence the motivation of children to engage with reading and writing:

Interests

If children are interested in what they are reading or having read to them or what they are writing about they are likely to be well motivated. This puts pressure on the teacher to carefully select the reading materials and the topics and themes being pursued. Finding out what areas of knowledge individual children are interested in is therefore a task for the teacher. The more knowledgeable the child is about a particular area of knowledge, the more likely he or she is to want to read more on that area. A child may be more interested in some genres than others.

Attitudes

Some reading research suggests that positive attitudes to reading (both for recreational and academic purposes) declines from grade 1 to 6 for both girls and boys, though girls have a generally more positive attitude to reading. The less able a reader is, the more drastic the decline in attitude to recreational reading. This suggests that getting learners reading fluently as soon as possible is of the greatest importance. Attitudes will also be influenced by the general culture in the environment.

Involvement

If children can get really involved with reading, if they are really engaged in reading and spend time on it, their motivation to continue will increase. The teacher needs to create opportunities where the children have enough time to get really absorbed in what they

are doing. Child involving activities and play are especially important in the early grades. Thus, for example, if children know that they are going to draw a picture based on a story or act it out, they are often more involved in the text.

Self-efficacy and self-confidence

Children who believe that they can do things (such as handle difficult words and passages in texts) are going to be better motivated than those who doubt their own abilities. It is important for teachers to help young children gain a sense of accomplishment by the careful choice of appropriate texts and reading challenges. This is particularly important in encouraging reading in children from poor literacy environments. The teacher has the task of building the learner's belief in his or her ability to read and that it is worth their effort and perseverance to do practice reading.

Sense of control and choice

Children's own sense of being in control of what they do and of the choices they make, is important in building up independent readers. Choice is also highly correlated with interest – we are more interested in what we ourselves choose. Teachers, can, wherever possible, encourage children to make choices about what they read and write.

Being knowledgeable

Understanding that being knowledgeable is a good thing – and that it will help one achieve in school – is a strong motivator, particularly when the focus on reading and writing in the higher grades is no longer learning to read but rather reading (and writing) to learn. Teachers need to show children the ways of using information texts for mathematics and life skills in the Foundation Phase and all the various subjects in the Intermediate and later phases. Teachers need to set this as an explicit goal and stress that dedication to being knowledgeable is really important.

Motivating children to read

Literacy teachers must recognise the importance of the early strengthening of motivation to read. They must encourage the building of perceptions that reading is important, interesting and pleasurable.

In the early grades this is best done by providing opportunities for learners to listen to and read and respond with enjoyment to a variety of interesting, engaging, social justice informing, and conceptually rich texts. Enjoyable and fun activities like drawing and acting out books or dramatising them all play a role.

In this process the teacher as a positive role model is vital.

In situations where prizes or other rewards are given to children they should be books or book vouchers as they are more effective in encouraging reading motivation than rewards that are unrelated to the literacy.

An enabling literacy environment in the classroom as well as the general culture of reading in the school is also vital in supporting positive experiences among the children

about literacy. Every Foundation Phase classroom should have a reading corner (including a small library of books) and displays of text rich materials. This is particularly important where children have not had the benefit of having books in their home or having books of their own. Children who have books of their own enjoy reading more and read more frequently.

Engagement with parents is important in stressing that their children are more likely to learn to read well, love reading and continue to be readers if books and reading are valued in the home.

Response in reading

Reading, as a form of meaningful communication, should evoke a response. That response is not simply a cognitive one but also affective – it includes our emotions, our values, beliefs and feelings about our identity.

The role of positive affective response to reading is very important and teachers need to facilitate the expression of that response – in comments, discussion, answers to questions, and creative output in writing or drawing.

The teacher is unlikely to genuinely do much in encouraging responsiveness to reading unless she or he is an active reader who enjoys reading and is enthusiastic about it.

Motivation and response in relation to genres

Different genres evoke different affective responses. Reading narrative texts (stories) is often affectively laden, and even young readers may want to read them because of their emotional effect – from which they gain pleasure, excitement, an emotional link to the characters in the story, interpersonal drama, and also experiences of such things as beauty and elegance in writing.

Reading for information

Reading information (non-fiction) books may be linked more strongly to goals of reading to learn knowledge, seeking information, and the desire to find answers to our curiosity about the physical, natural and social worlds. Teachers also need to encourage children to read information books.

Reading for pleasure

There is a growing body of evidence about the importance of reading for pleasure for both educational purposes as well as personal development. If you are gaining pleasure from reading you are more likely to read more often, including out of school hours, build up your vocabulary and general knowledge faster and generally improve education attainment.

It is important that reading for pleasure happens early – often children enjoy reading less as they get older (particularly if they do not read well), boys tend to get less pleasure from reading than girls, as do children from lower socio-economic backgrounds (who generally have a poorer head start in initial reading).

Reading for pleasure is strongly influenced by positive relationships between teachers and children, and children and their families.

The literacy teacher as a role model

Teachers of reading should themselves be habitual readers. Unless a teacher herself values reading it is unlikely that a positive attitude to reading can be communicated to a class.

In the pre-school period and in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases it is also important that teachers read to them (with expression and enjoyment) and also demonstrate that they themselves read for information and pleasure..

The literacy environment

A reading and writing conducive environment will encourage children to read. Children in primary school need to be in physical and psychological proximity to books and other texts – in the classrooms and, ideally in their homes as well – that, is, in environments that are literacy friendly and encourages them to read and write.

8 Texts for children

[Standards: K21, P4, E6, F6]

Knowledge of and access to children's literature and reading resources
Selecting texts by genre, reading level appropriateness, difficulty and contextual relevance
Reading to children
Reading from the Internet
Making own resources
A text rich environment

Conventional children's literature comprises stories, folk tales, songs, poems and some non-fiction material that are used to entertain, instruct and educate young people. In current times the texts available for children go beyond the boundaries of traditional literature and include picture books, magazines, comics, graphic novels, non-book texts and a multitude of digital texts.

The value of texts for children is that they can be used in teaching children how to read, to become familiar with print, to gain information and new perspectives from fiction, poetry, and nonfiction, and be entertained, and to be motivated to become lifelong readers.

Knowledge of and access to children's literature

A primary school literacy teacher should be knowledgeable about the children's literature available in the particular languages (and indeed should have read a considerable quantity of it). This would apply both to fiction and non-fiction.

In the case of English there are a number of encyclopaedia, dictionaries, and other reference works and lists of books according to genre and age groups dealing with children's literature.

Children's books and readers in African languages are increasingly available through the internet, with sites with downloadable books such as:

African Storybook https://www.africanstorybook.org/

Department of Basic Education
Graded readers and Big Books (Home Language) Grades 1 to 3
https://www.education.gov.za/Curriculum/LearningandTeachingSupportMaterials(LTSM)/GradedReadersandBigBookHL.aspx

Big Books, posters, anthology books, workbooks and worksheets (Second Additional Language) Grade 1 to 3
https://www.education.gov.za/Curriculum/LearningandTeachingSupportMaterials(LTSM)/IIALResources.aspx

International Children's Digital Library http://en.childrenslibrary.org/books/index.shtml

Molteno Vula Bula https://vulabula.molteno.co.za/

Nal'ibali https://nalibali.org/story-library

The teacher familiar with this literature and its various genres will be able to select appropriate books to aid children's enjoyment and comprehension of what they read, enlarge their vocabulary, help in Additional Language learning, and develop their own creative writing skills.

Selecting texts by genre, reading level appropriateness, difficulty and contextual relevance

The teacher has to be able to explain in meaningful terms the purposes, functions and structure of various kinds and **genres** of texts (such as messages, letters, stories, myths, folktales, poems, drama, and informational texts) both fiction and non-fiction.

Selecting books by **grade level** categories is more complicated as the criteria for these divisions are vague, and books near a borderline may be classified either way. Books for younger children tend to be short, written in simple language, use large print, and have many illustrations. Books for older children use increasingly complex language, normal sized print, and fewer (if any) illustrations. There may be a wide variation in a class of children's reading abilities.

The **difficulty of texts** can partly be determined by the teacher simply reading them through (looking at length, new vocabulary, appropriate background knowledge, complexity within settings and cultural contexts, and textual complexity) or by using other more technical means, such as a readability formula (which some common wordprocessors have and see www.readabilityformulas.com) or a text complexity checklist. Some children's books are already graded (though usually, with English books to or United Kingdom or North American reading norms).

The **contextual relevance** of books is a difficult issue. We find it easier to understand what we already know or have experienced. However, broadening knowledge and vocabulary and finding out about the different and new is a necessary challenge in education.

As in all literature, some books have what we would consider **outdated and offensive content**, e.g. racist, sexist, classist, xenophobic, and colonialist. While it is undoubtedly right to protect young children from such literature, in the later primary years children can begin to be educated in how to deal with elements in what they read that they disagree with or are considered offensive by people with contemporary values. They must be trusted to make responsible critical judgments. A caution may be needed to avoid over analysing and evaluating texts in such a way as to cause disengagement by the learners.

Reading to children

Teachers in training should have practice in reading texts to the children in the classroom in a way that keeps them engaged and interested. They should ask questions about what children read, check on knowledge of the vocabulary and about the contents, situations and characters described and the sequence and logical links between the different parts of the narration. They should be asked about their mental and emotional responses. The ***CAPS*** curriculum has descriptions of a number of ways of setting up reading activities.

Reading from the Internet

Increasingly, as digital resources and internet connectivity improve both in and outside of schools and as children become more familiar with and adept at busing tablets, smartphones and computers, the internet will become a source of texts for reading. Teachers cannot afford to be left behind in this changing digital environment.

Using the internet requires not only basic reading fluency and comprehension skills but also advance information finding techniques and the ability to critically assess the value of the texts that are found.

Web pages contain text conventions that are different from printed texts. Readers cannot skim text by rapidly paging through, for example a chapter of an informational text. Instead they must strategically decide how to preview multiple levels of a website moving from one link to another amidst a large number of link possibilities (of varying relevance and some of which may be so-called click-bait).

Results from search engines such as Google are usually long lists of possible links with many at the top of the list being adverts leading to commercial sites. Consequently, readers have to critically evaluate the usefulness of these links. They have to carefully examine each entry on the list, noticing text and screen features embedded within the website addresses, website annotations, and file extensions after each hyperlinked resource. These features help readers make inferences about a website's topic, purpose, creator, and audience.

Teachers should be able to model for learners the various steps, thinking out loud as they do so, for previewing a website, making menu choices, predicting where the links will lead (and being able to reverse when these are dead ends), trying to determine the creator and date of the information, and making a critical judgement on whether to explore the site further and make use of its information.

Making own resources

Children who have begun to read and write can be encouraged to make their own booklets (and also illustrate them). Such creative writing enables the children to express their own thoughts and feelings and to discover what they know or think about a topic.

They can be asked to write about what interests them. They can be asked to write a story about a picture or some experience they have recently had. Teachers can give prompts towards topics and structure.

Collections of the children's writing can be housed in the classroom library.

A text rich environment

Children in primary school need to be in physical and psychological proximity to books and other texts – in the classrooms and, ideally in their homes as well – that, is, in environments that are literacy friendly and encourages them to read and write. In the pre-school period and in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases it is also important that teachers read to them. And teachers of reading should themselves be habitual readers.

9 Working with a school literacy curriculum

[Standards: P1]

What teachers need to know about an official school curriculum
About the South African ***CAPS***
The ***CAPS*** on literacy
CAPS reading and writing activities
Using the South African Department of Basic Education workbooks

What teachers need to know about an official school curriculum

Teachers in training should be prepared to be able to understand and adapt to any curriculum operating in the schools they teach in. In many cases this will be an official state authorised curriculum (as is now the position in South Africa), or there may be a specific school-based one (where often a de facto curriculum may be imposed through the use of a particular commercially developed curriculum and materials package).

Whatever the case, a new teacher needs to be familiar with the structure and approach of the curriculum and its specific requirements. The teacher needs to have a critical understanding of the approaches taken by the curriculum and know how the curriculum can be implemented (and adapted when necessary) using available materials and resources, using appropriate evidence-based teaching strategies, and be able to plan suitable learning and assessment activities.

About the South African ***CAPS***

The current prescribed curriculum for South African public and many independent schools is the ***Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements*** (CAPS). Separate statements are available for all primary school phases in both Home Language and First Additional Language in all languages.

All the ***CAPS*** volumes have a similar format:

- brief general introduction on the aims of the ***CAPS***
- time allocations table for each grade
- introduction about language and the teaching approach, time allocations, assessment approach, and descriptions of various activities
- detailed teaching plans and teaching activities by grade for each language and literacy component generally and by term (and in Home Language in two week chunks)
- a glossary.

All the ***CAPS*** documents are available on the Department of Basic Education website (https://www.education.gov.za/Curriculum/CurriculumAssessmentPolicyStatements(CAPS).aspx)

Like many documents created by committees, there are some internal incoherences in the ***CAPS***, seen most spectacularly in the contrast between the prescriptive curriculum sequence and detailed timetabling as against the preliminary injunctions that the ***CAPS*** are **recommendations** rather than mechanically applicable mandatory regulations. In practice education officials and subject-advisors are likely to interpret it in a fairly prescriptive way.

Although all the ***CAPS*** language documents are available in all the South African languages it is clear that the English version was the master one, and that the versioning into the African languages is not really adequate. Ideally, all the African language versions need to be comprehensively revised.

The ***CAPS*** on literacy

The ***CAPS*** stresses the importance of the teaching literacy strategy favoured in this Framework:

> CAPS requires the use of certain strategies for reading to ensure optimal modelling and increasing learner reading-independence.
>
> Integral to each of the strategies is the involvement of the teacher, using discussions to develop vocabulary, decoding, word recognition, comprehension, and text structures. If well used, the strategies will be of benefit to improving reading competences for fluency, comprehension and for reading pleasure.

It states that the five main components to the teaching of reading: Phonemic awareness, Word recognition (sight words and phonics), Vocabulary, Fluency and Comprehension, need to be taught explicitly and practised on a daily basis.

The student teacher needs to be made familiar with the relevant ***CAPS*** volume for the relevant language(s) in the appropriate phase. Each student should have a copy (whether print or electronic) of this or these ***CAPS*** documents and ideally that of the preceding or following phase.

The ***CAPS*** requires the use of a number of instructional methods that the student teacher needs to become familiar and practised with. The same applies to the recommended lesson sequences.

The CAPS reading and writing activities

The ***CAP*** Home Language and First Additional Language statements in the various official languages give detailed guidance on what a teacher has to do by way of oral work, reading and writing focus times and various kinds of reading activities – shared reading, paired reading, and independent reading, and on the formation of ability groups. For each of these detailed steps are provided.

Any teacher in training who is going to work in a South African primamry school needs to be familiar with all these guidelines, methods and techniques.

Using the Department of Basic Education workbooks

Since 2011 the Department of Basic Education has provided a set of full-colour printed learner workbooks for every child in public schools. The Home language Literacy/Language texts are in all the official languages for Grades R to 6 and the English First Additional Language texts for Grades 1 to 3 (though only in an interactive electronic format).

Given that these are a major resource (and that in many schools they may be the only texts available to each child in a class) it is also necessary that student teachers should be familiar with them and know how to use them and the accompanying teacher manual.

While many teachers previously lacked the minimal classroom resources, teachers are now often overwhelmed when receiving large volumes of texts in the form of workbooks, big books, posters and readers which are distributed by the Department of Basic Education. Student teachers and in-service teachers need to be capacitated to use these texts in a meaningful way.

10 Assessment and remediation

[Standards: P5, P6, E5, F5]

What is assessment and why is it important?
Assessment in the context of the reading and writing development continuum
Assessing the different components of reading and writing
Types of assessment instruments
Literacy assessment responses
Understanding the reasons for reading and writing difficulties and how difficulties can be addressed
Types of reading difficulties

What is assessment and why is it important?

The general purposes of assessment are to find out what learners *know* (or do not know) and *can* (or cannot) *do* at a specific point in time – and more specifically for diagnosis, guidance, grading, selection, prediction, motivation, standard maintaining and evaluation of teaching effectiveness. Assessment can be formative or summative. Regular formative assessment is vital in reading and writing development.

Apart from the general usefulness of assessment in tracking individual learners' progress over time and seeing whether they are achieving norms and benchmarks, it is particularly important in the early school grades as remediation of literacy learning difficulties is less and less effective after Grade 2.

Assessment in the context of the reading development continuum

In order to assess reading effectively, teachers should have a good understanding of the phases of reading development and what is expected in terms of reading and vocabulary in the different grades of the primary school, and particularly in the Foundation Phase. The ***CAPS*** specifies some of these expectations.

The teacher should know what learners need to be able to read and write within and across the relevant grades and subjects. In other words, the teacher should know what the indicators are for each phase (and of course be able to differentiate between what has been done in teaching (covering the ***CAPS*** curriculum) and actual learning (what the child actually learns (knows and can do)). Teachers should also understand that individual children move through the phases at different paces and that benchmarks need to be used flexibly for the particular grade and language.

It should be recognised that much necessary reading assessment in the early grades can only be done on a one-to-one basis, however administratively difficult it is in large classes. Group guided reading provides the main opportunity for teachers to hear each child read individually, to assess progress informally and to provide feedback. Feedback is vital if children are to make progress in their reading. Teachers should hear every child read at least once a week and they should keep individual records of children's progress.

Assessing the different components of reading

Teachers should be able to quickly and accurately assess where children are in their reading development and plan instruction accordingly, deciding on when the various components of reading and writing receive an assessment focus. Although literacy learning has many discrete components, in daily classroom practice many of the components are active or are being addressed simultaneously.

Among the things that can and should be assessed are:

- Oral language development/ Listening comprehension
- Concepts of print
- Phonological awareness (important in Grade R and Term 1 of Grade 1)
- Phonemic awareness (important in Grade 1)/Phoneme segmentation
- Alphabetic knowledge/Letter recognition
- Decoding (Phonics)
- Vocabulary /Spelling
- Fluency
- Comprehension (at many levels and degrees of complexity)

Many of these assessments require the use of texts and teachers should be aware of the dangers of relying on whole-class oral repetition rather than text-based work.

As with all assessment, it must be conducted as accurately as possible, there must be systematic analysis and recording of results, and where appropriate, rapid feedback to the individual learners.

Types of assessment instruments

Measurement

Teachers should have at least basic familiarity with ways of testing:

- Phonological awareness
- Phoneme segmentation
- Phoneme deletion
- Rapid letter naming
- Syllable recognition
- Word recognition
- Nonword reading
- Vocabulary/Spelling
- Oral reading fluency

Screening assessments

These are given to all learners at the start of the school year to determine which learners are at risk of struggling with reading. They are not used to diagnose specific reading difficulties (that should be done with diagnostic assessments). Such screening instruments should be fast and easy to use. **Reading readiness** and **baseline assessments** serve a similar purpose of finding out where the learners are at the

beginning of the year so a programme can be planned and this information can be enhanced by looking at the learners' reading records from the previous grade. They can be used for placing children in ability groups for group guided reading and for matching texts to the reading ability of each group.

Diagnostic assessments

These are used to assess specific skills or components of reading such as phonemic awareness, phonics skills, and fluency. The help the teacher to plan responsive instruction and remediation for at-risk readers. There several useful rubrics for assessing oral reading fluency.

Norm-referenced assessments

These are formal assessments that can also be used as diagnostic tools. The score on such a test compares the learner's skills to a defined population (of the same age or grade) used in standardizing the test. Though there are many such instruments in English they have yet to be developed in most African languages. There are the beginnings of norms for oral reading fluency in some of these languages.

Criterion-referenced assessments

These are can be both formal and informal assessments and can also be used for diagnostic purposes, and also as diagnostic tools. The score compares the learner's skills to a defined set of skills and a goal (criterion) for mastery. These assessments are administered before instruction and after instruction to measure a student's skill growth. Many are available in English.

Outcome assessments

These can be given to all learners in a grade. They measure learners' skills against grade-level expectations. Outcome assessments are used to make decisions about learners, teachers, a school, or even an entire school system. The Annual National Assessments (ANAs) used for several years by the Department of Basic Education were such outcome assessments.

Progress monitoring assessments

These measure a learner's overall progress during the school year or progress toward acquiring specific skills that have been taught.

Literacy assessment responses

The responses to literacy assessments depend upon the purpose of the assessments,

Screening assessments require placements of learner in appropriate groups or special attention to particular problems revealed by the screening.

Diagnostic assessments often require individual, one-to-one attention, and, as is really the case for all assessment, as speedily as possible.

Norm, criterion, outcome and progress monitoring assessment give guidance on whether the pace and quality of the instruction is working and often require relooking at instructional content and sequencing.

Understanding the reasons for reading and writing difficulties and how they can be addressed

Human beings have great diversity in the way their brains function with individuals being better or poorer at doing some things than others. Though this diversity helps groups of people as a whole, in certain cases some individuals are simply less able at learning to read fluently. Boys are far more than twice as likely as girls to have reading problems. However, with proper instruction most healthy children can be taught to read.

The most common early reading difficulties are in phonemic awareness and phonological processing. Such children find it difficult to link oral language to words in print. They find decoding difficult and read very slowly and labouriously with little comprehension.

Physical problems in hearing or eyesight will cause reading problems. It is important for teachers to identify learner who have hearing or seeing problems.

The problem with most reading difficulties is that they hamper practice in and the motivation to read. This is why it is so important that they be identified early (through assessment) and dealt with immediately. This is crucial as children who get off to a poor start seldom catch up.

In some cases reading difficulties can be addressed in the classroom by the teacher, or through spending some extra time after classes are ended. In other cases there should be referrals to specialist services.

Types of reading difficulties

Identifying the type of difficulty the learner has is important for deciding on how to remediate the problem:

- **Good language comprehension but poor word recognition/decoding skills** which require **phonics** interventions (including explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, sound-letter relationships, blending, dealing with polysyllabic words (which are common in African languages) and automatic recognition of high frequency morphemes (e.g. prefixes) and words).

- **Poor comprehension but good word recognition/decoding skills** which require **comprehension** interventions (vocabulary, inferencing skills, background knowledge, etc.)

- **Poor comprehension and word recognition/decoding skills** which require both **phonics** and **comprehension** interventions.

11 Planning and consolidation

[Standards: K9, P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, E5, F5]

Why is planning important?
Different levels of planning
Understanding and planning for reading and writing progression
The role of routines in supporting reading and writing development
Supporting reading outside the class
The complexities of Foundation Phase planning
The literacy environment
Reflection on practice

Why is planning important?

The reasons for planning are obvious. In planning one can:

- Set explicit, challenging and achievable instructional goals
- Structure pathways for progress over the year with instruction, practice and time for consolidation of learning
- Timetable the pace of instruction to maximize learning
- Timetable each stage of going through the ***CAPS*** curriculum content
- Schedule daily opportunities for children to read
- Plan and schedule regular formative and summative assessment for learning and consolidation and make instructional revisions based upon assessment results
- Estimate the availability of texts and resources and plan their procurement.

The actual planning will depend very much on the character of the school and the nature of the oversight by a head of department or phase and the extent to which the individual teacher has to fit into a school plan or has to devise her or his own.

Different levels of planning

School planning takes place (or should take place) at both macro (whole school and phase) and micro (at grade or classroom) levels.

Macro planning for the year plan should be done at least at phase level with other same phase teachers and look at curriculum coverage, the themes to be used, placement and assessment, materials and resources and marking memoranda.

Micro planning at the classroom level would include things like scheduling the different reading activities (e.g. Shared Reading, Phonics, Group Guided Reading, Paired Reading and Independent Reading) and ensuring smooth transitions between activities and, on a day-to-day level planning the structure of individual days and lessons, building daily routines to maximize productive time on tasks and ensuring that the materials needed are indeed in the classroom.

Understanding and planning for reading and writing progression

The teacher who understands how reading development happens knows which components of reading (and the activities specified in the ***CAPS*** curriculum) need to be focussed on within each grade and across grades and how much time needs to be spent on these activities (whether phonological awareness and phonics, vocabulary development, fluency or comprehension) and when.

In many cases the official ***CAPS*** school curriculum lays down how much time has to be spent on particular activities in each grade and term, e.g. on listening and speaking, reading and phonics, handwriting and writing.

Classrooms in South Africa are characterised by a wide ability range and children with reading difficulties are often not identified and supported early enough. Children end up in a class without their reading difficulties having been identified in the previous grade. Plans have to be made for children within the same grade and class being at different levels of reading development. Decisions have to be made about what are reasonable reading norms for the particular grade and group of children. Plans have to be made about differentiating instruction for learners at different levels of competence.

The role of routines in reading and writing development

Building up reading fluency requires regular practice. Simple, flexible daily classroom routines are needed to engage learners in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Routines are the planned procedures the teacher can establish in the classroom to offer structure to their learners. Routines are the shared individual and group habits within a classroom community. Learners come to know that this is the way they do things in the language and literacy classroom. They can count on certain structures to take place regularly and can expect them to be part of regular business of their studies. Many of these literacy routines are specified in the ***CAPS*** documents.

Supporting reading outside the class

Reading requires reading and vocabulary growth. This reading development is largely dependent on reading done out of class and plans have to be made to ensure parental and caregiver support for the reading activities of children out of school hours. Meetings with parents have to be held.

The complexities of Foundation Phase planning

Planning for the day-to-day activities of the Foundation Phase teacher is complex as a single class teacher usually has to teach all the subjects (Language and Literacy (Home Language and First Additional Language), Mathematics, Life Skills). All these subjects have to be fitted in, often on the same day. Small children have to be kept interested so lessons have to be short. Yet these short activities have to be sequenced and connected in some way to keep the curriculum coherent and systematic. Time for reading on an individual basis has to be fitted into the day and weekly timetable.

Misconceptions exist that the ***CAPS*** does not require teachers to prepare lesson plans Research suggests that many teachers are unable to structure lessons, and that there is a lack of agreement among teachers and subject advisors regarding how to plan or even what constitutes a lesson plan.

The literacy environment

Plans have to be made for creating a language and literacy rich learning environment in the classroom, and, through interaction with teacher peers, in the school as a whole.

Spaces have to be created for individual, small-group, and whole-class speaking, listening, reading and writing activities.

Access has to be created to print, audio, video, digital, and online classroom materials.

Reflection on practice

Space has to be dedicated for reflecting on one's own practice as a literacy teacher, evaluating what works and what does not, and then adjusting year, term and lesson plans and the weekly timetable accordingly.

Any critical evaluation must analyse the reasons for any non-implementation of timetables, work schedules, lessons plans and guides, and lead to remedial planning and action.

Assessment results have to be honestly looked at to see whether past instructional strategies and methods have in fact worked and then revised accordingly if required.

12 Literacy and literacies

[Standards: K4, K6, P3, E2, F2]

The terminology and conceptualisation of literacy and literacies
The social practices approach to literacy(ies)
Teaching knowledge literacies – visual, digital, etc.
Literacy and multilingualism
Literacy debates – the Reading Wars

Graduate teachers should be able to demonstrate some basic knowledge about the terminology and current theories and debates about literacy and literacy and literacies.

The terminology and conceptualisation of literacy and literacies

Student teachers should be able to distinguish between the common definition of literacy as the ability to read and write and the use of the term "literacies" in a number of different ways.

One very common use of the term literacies is to use when referring (somewhat metaphorically) to any form of initial "competence or knowledge in a specified area". It can be used to describe any form of basic foundational knowledge that gives one access to a particular subject or field of knowledge, e.g. computer literacy means that one has a basic knowledge of how computers work or can use a computer in a simple way. Thus one can be "literate" in the foundational or basic knowledge of the terms, discourses, jargon, symbols and basic principles of a range of disciplines and fields of knowledge or in a particular set of skills.

Common usages of the term "literacies" is to refer to the ability to understand or use visual images, computers, the internet and other technology, and other basic means to understand, communicate, gain useful knowledge, and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture. These are all important "literacies" in the world of modern communications where written forms combine with auditory, visual, spatial, oral and tactile representations. Information, especially in the media, appear in multi-modal formats, increasing the importance of understanding these representations as well as the reliance on these types of format.

Typical of such "literacies" are the following:

Visual literacy: Understanding visual communications, including the ability to process and represent knowledge through images.

Digital literacy: Gathering and synthesizing information from digital mediums, including online sources or mediums.

Technological literacy: Using technology responsibly to learn, communicate, distribute, and create.

There is another use of the term literacies in what is known as the social practices approach to literacy.

The social practices approach to literacy(ies)

This is a theory of literacy (associated with the New Literacy Studies movement) that stresses the links between the activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded. This theory suggests that, within a given culture, there are different "literacies" associated with different domains of life, operating in multiple modes. Literacy practices are conceptualised as being patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and always rooted in a particular ideological world view. Some of its proponents argue that in the rapidly changing world there has to be a shift from one dominant language to a more multilingual and multicultural one and that more use should be made of multimodal meaning making opportunities (e.g., visual images, speech, music, etc.) created by the new digital technologies. These would be "multiliteracies". Generally this approach dismisses the idea that "literacy" contributes to cognitive development (in spite of the accumulating scientific research evidence to the contrary). An identified danger in this approach (as seen from a schooling perspective) is that if all these multiple literacies are equally valid, and most of them do not correspond to the ones expected by the school system, then conventional basic literacy will be neglected. Whilst the social practices approach can provide insights into how literacy practices are embedded in society and reflect particular ideologies, it has very little practical application to teaching children how to read in school

Teaching knowledge literacies – visual, digital, etc.

Clearly schoolchildren need to become familiar with many of these new "literacies"and middle-class children are often very familiar with them, even before they attend school. However, in practice, common alphabetisation literacy is a necessary precursor to any serious engagement in most of these "literacies".

One possible exception to this is **visual literacy** when so many children now have access to picture books. Middle class South Africans, with high levels of education, usually liberally ply their children with illustrated books and magazines from infancy. These children soon attain western pictorial literacy and understand all the modern western pictorial conventions such as:

- seeing objects and figures against a background or field
- lines used as an outline or edge of figures or objects (even though such lines do not exist in reality)
- understanding that the bottom of the picture is 'down' and the top 'up'
- seeing depth in pictures on the basis of cues such as perspective (with relative height and size of objects – objects drawn smaller the further away they are; superimpositions with nearer objects overlapping further away ones; nearer objects drawn near the bottom of the picture; shadows; etc.)
- shading to represent form, volume or roundness as well as shadow

- pictures with single (fixed-point) perspective
- seeing movement in 'frozen movement'
- short lines representing movement
- that 'cut-offs' do not mean amputation or dismemberment
- that drawings can represent what is normally invisible (for example a cross section of the human body)
- that there are various conventional symbols for such things as rain, impact ('seeing stars') and that arrows 'point' and that speech bubbles represent speech and thought bubbles inner unexpressed thoughts
- that maps, diagrams and graphs have their own specialised conventions
- stylisations to represent figures and objects (for example, stick figures or the pictographs in road signs)
- the drawing of objects to different scales
- that there can be sequences of pictures to tell a story in time.

However, many people in South Africa who can read text fluently may not have learned many of these conventions. Most people of lower educational attainments in a rural setting without access to illustrated book and magazines will probably not.

Computer literacy requires, as a start, the ability to use a keyboard, a mouse, trackpad, trackball or similar device, and be able to read the words and instructions on the screen.

Literacy and multilingualism

There is a substantial current debate amongst language education academics about multilingualism and literacy development. Multilingualism is the use of more than one language, either by an individual speaker or by a community of speakers. In the context of educational debates one position is that given that multilingualism is so common, worldwide and in metropoles such as Johannesburg, literacy educators should embrace children's linguistic repertoires as resources for bi- and multi-literacies. This goes against traditional school curriculum practice in which instruction in home and first additional language are kept separate. In this sense it has much in common with the idea of multiliteracies.

Student teachers need to be made aware of the ongoing debates around this.

Literacy debates – the Reading Wars

How to teach basic literacy has been a contested issue for decades. In North America the debate became so serious in the 1990s that it was described as "the reading wars". These "wars" were largely an argument between advocates of a "whole language" approach to teaching reading (which argued that learning to read is a natural process,

much like learning to talk), and which had become the dominant view of many teacher education institutions, and the "phonics" approach (which insisted that children needed to be systematically taught decoding as a key component of initial learning to read).

However, over time, there arose increasing research evidence that the whole language approach didn't work and recent neurological studies have conclusively proved that the reading process in the brains of good readers is congruent with the phonics approach. A number of English speaking countries – the United Kingdom, Australia and many states of the United States of America have now adopted a particular phonics approach – synthetic phonics". countries However the whole language approach to literacy development is still often propagated by teacher training institutions, though often under titles such as "a balanced approach" or "emergent literacy".

Student teachers need to have at least an introduction to this debate and some familiarity with the main neuroscience findings on beginning reading.

13 Teaching English as a First Additional Language

[Standards: K1, K2, K3, K4, K5, K10, E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6]

Language learning
Knowledge of the English language
The issue of English spelling
Phase and grade appropriate multimodal instructional strategies and methods
Recognition of the variety of language teaching and learning contexts
BICS and CALP
Benchmarks

This is a vital component as the majority of learners in the schooling system will be studying English as an additional language up to Grade 12.

In addition, as in perhaps a majority of schools, English has been chosen as the medium of instruction (the so-called Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT)) from Grade 4 onwards, the study of English as a first additional language provides a foundation for their understanding of English as a LOLT.

Language knowledge

Though it should be assumed that student teachers have already had some basic grounding in the relationship between language and literacy this knowledge will need to be enhanced with attention to:

- The distinction between acquiring a home language and learning an additional language
- Theories on learning an additional language
- The structural differences between English, Afrikaans (non-agglutinative) and Bantu (agglutinative) languages
- The implications of young learners learning non-cognate languages
- The structural and orthographic differences between English/Afrikaans and the Bantu languages of South Africa
- Features of the home languages that support or constrain the learning of the English
- Knowledge of the transfer of linguistic and literacy knowledge and skills between languages

Knowledge of the English language

Student teachers need to have sound knowledge of English:

- **Phonology**
  The consonant and vowel phonemes of English
  The pronunciation of English sounds including vowels (e.g. closed, open, r-controlled, vowel team, vowel-silent e, consonant-le)
  Basic stress and intonation patterns
  Syllable structure (and how it varies from those used in the learners' primary languages)
  The phoneme-grapheme correspondence system of English (learners need to know that the letters often represent different sounds in English from the letter-sound correspondences they have learned for their home language)

- **Orthography**
  English orthography maps sound to print at the level of whole-word (cat), phoneme (/c//a/ /t/), grapheme (c-a-t), and sound spelling (c-at) patterns. All of these units must be learned to master English orthography.

- **Morphology**
  Word classes (e.g. nouns, verbs, adjectives, articles, conjunctions, pronouns)
  Grammatical functions in sentences (e.g., subject, verb, object)
  Grammatical constructions (e.g. subject-verb agreement/concordial agreement, conjunctions)

- **Vocabulary, word meanings and usage**
  Roots, affixes, and common Greek- and Latin-based English words
  Words essential to learners' everyday lives
  Words useful in academic subjects that have considerable bearing on learners' understanding of the curriculum
  English language requirements in school subjects in the Intermediate Phase
  Subject content-specific vocabulary that often causes confusion and that is essential for learning and expressing important concepts

- **Syntax**
  Word order and the relationship between words and sentences in English

- **Semantics and pragmatics**
  The extension and modification of word meanings in the context of use
  Common English metaphors
  Metonymy and synecdoche
  Connotation and denotation
  Language use appropriate to different social contexts

The issue of English spelling

The spelling of words in English is more regular and pattern based than commonly believed.

Half of all English words can be spelled accurately on the basis of sound-symbol correspondences alone, meaning that the letters used to spell these words predictably represent their sound patterns (e.g., *back, clay, baby*). These patterns, though, are somewhat complex and must be learned (e.g., when to use "*ck*" as in *back* and when to use "*k*" as in *book*).

Another 34 percent of English words would only have one error (usually of a vowel) if they were spelled on the basis of sound-symbol correspondences alone. Only about 4% are truly irregular. There are rules for helping understand the spelling of the irregular words usually by looking at their morphology.

Phase and grade appropriate multimodal instructional strategies and methods

There are a huge variety of resources on the teaching of English and student teachers should be familiar with many of them and know how to access them.

Generally, students must know a suite of methods to assist learners make the transition from instruction in the home language to instruction in English. Particular attention must be given to developing communicative competence.

In the Foundation and Intermediate phases teachers need to know how to teach children learning English how to segment speech sounds and process the English phonics system. Children need to learn the English alphabetic code (spelling, letter knowledge, and phonemic awareness) so that they can acquire English vocabulary through both reading and oral language instruction. There is no reason to delay teaching children with limited English proficiency the letter names, English speech sounds, and letter-sound correspondences.

The complex spelling system of English and resulting common errors in writing requires considerable attention.

Teachers need to be able to recognise and respond to errors of English learners.

Special attention needs to be paid in the Intermediate and Senior Phases to the knowledge and correct use of academic language in English (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)). There are useful lists of such words (e.g. Coxhead, 2013).

Recognition of the variety of language teaching and learning contexts

Students need to be prepared for a variety of teaching contexts, for example:

- Foundation Phase with learners with no or limited knowledge (or even exposure) to English and who are still learning to be literate in their home language(s)

- Intermediate Phase with learners who are now being taught through the medium of English (particularly in the transition from Grade 3 to Grade 4), taking into account that English is an additional language in which learners may have only limited proficiency

- Intermediate or later phases with children taking English FAL as a subject with the aim of developing near home language fluency in English for use in secondary school.

- Teaching a class where there is a mix of learners for whom English is a home language or a FAL

- Teaching in a classroom in which there is a wide diversity of home languages

- Teaching in a multi-grade classroom in which learners have variable knowledge of English

Student teachers need to understand that EFAL learning may be positively or negatively influenced by the children's home, community and environmental circumstances

They also should recognise the implications of learners speaking a different language or languages at home and how this may impact on their learning

BICS and CALP

Some attention must be given to ensuring that learners develop competence in both communicating in the language of the everyday and in reading and writing in the discourse of "school" and the "academy". School going children have to demonstrate what is called "Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency" (CALP) as distinct from the language of the everyday "Basic Interpersonal Communication" (BICS). These academic words mainly appear in written texts and are increasingly necessary for the literacy practices engaged in school study as children advance through the grades. They include general school/academic words that appear frequently in most subjects, subject specific terms, and literary vocabulary that appears in literature but not much in everyday life.

Benchmarks

Suitable benchmark instruments must be used to describe learners' knowledge and use of English and to assist in designing assessments.

14 Teaching African languages and Afrikaans as First Additional Languages

[Standards: K1, K2, K3, K4, K5, K10, F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6]

Language learning
Knowledge of the language
Phase and grade appropriate multimodal instructional strategies and methods
Recognition of the variety of language teaching and learning contexts
BICS and CALP
Benchmarks

Language knowledge

Though it should be assumed that student teachers have already had some basic grounding in the relationship between language and literacy this knowledge will need to be enhanced with attention to:

- The distinction between acquiring a home language and learning an additional language
- Theories on learning an additional language
- The structural differences between Bantu (agglutinative) languages and Afrikaans and English (non-agglutinative)
- The implications of young learners learning non-cognate languages
- The structural and orthographic differences between Bantu languages and Afrikaans and English
- Features of the home languages that support or constrain the learning of other African languages or Afrikaans
- Knowledge of the transfer of linguistic and literacy knowledge and skills between languages

Knowledge of the language

Student teachers need to have sound knowledge of the African language or Afrikaans:

- **Phonology**
  The consonant and vowel phonemes of the language
  The pronunciation of sounds in the language
  Tone in African languages
  Basic stress and intonation patterns
  Syllable structure (and how it varies from those used in the home languages)

- **Morphology**
  The phoneme-grapheme correspondence system
  Word classes (e.g. nouns, verbs, adjectives, articles, conjunctions, pronouns)
  Noun classes in African languages
  Grammatical functions in sentences (e.g. subject, verb, object)
  Grammatical constructions (e.g. subject-verb agreement/concordial agreement, conjunctions)

- **Vocabulary, word meanings and usage**
  Word roots, prefixes, infixes, suffixes, word derivations, etc. as appropriate for the particular language
  Words essential or useful to learners' everyday lives
  Words useful in academic subjects that have considerable bearing on learners' understandings of the curriculum

- **Syntax**
  Word order and the relationship between words and sentences

- **Semantics and pragmatics**
  The extension and modification of word meanings in the context of use
  Metonymy and synecdoche
  Connotation and denotation
  Language use appropriate to different social contexts

Phase and grade appropriate multimodal instructional strategies and methods

Student teachers should be familiar with the resources available on the teaching of the language and know how to access them.

Generally, teachers must know a suite of methods to assist learners to make the transition from instruction in the home language to instruction in the additional language. Particular attention must be given to developing communicative competence.

In the Foundation and Intermediate phases teachers need to know how to teach children learning the language how to segment speech sounds and process the particular language's phonics system. Children need to learn the language's alphabetic code (spelling, letter knowledge, and phonemic awareness) so that they can acquire vocabulary through both reading and oral language instruction. There is no reason to delay teaching children with limited proficiency in the language the letter names, speech sounds, and letter-sound correspondences. Teachers need to be able to recognise and respond to errors of learners.

Recognition of the variety of language teaching and learning contexts

Student teachers need to be prepared for a variety of teaching contexts, for example:

- Foundation Phase with learners with no or limited knowledge (or even exposure) to the FAL and who are still learning to be literate in their home language(s)
- Intermediate Phase with learners who are now being taught through the medium of English
- Intermediate or later phases with children taking the FAL as a subject with the aim of developing near home language fluency in it for use in secondary school.
- Teaching a class where there is a mix of learners for whom the FAL language is a home language or a FAL.
- Teaching in a classroom in which there is a wide diversity of home languages
- Teaching in a multi-grade classroom in which learners have variable knowledge of the FAL

Student teachers need to understand that FAL learning may be positively or negatively influenced by the children's home, community and environmental circumstances

They also should recognise the implications of learners speaking a different language or languages at home and how this may impact on their learning

BICS and CALP

Some attention must be given to ensuring that learners develop competence in both communicating in the language of the everyday and in reading and writing in the discourse of "school" and the "academy". School going children have to demonstrate what is called "Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency" (CALP) as distinct from the language of the everyday "Basic Interpersonal Communication" (BICS). These academic words mainly appear in written texts and are increasingly necessary for the literacy practices engaged in school study as children advance through the grades. They include general school/academic words that appear frequently in most subjects, subject specific terms, and literary vocabulary that appears in literature but not much in everyday life.

Benchmarks

Suitable benchmark instruments must be used to describe learners' knowledge and use of English and to assist in designing assessments.

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