Sesotho and isiZulu Reading Project Study Materials

Module 2:
Oral language proficiency development, vocabulary building and motivation for reading

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

JET EDUCATION SERVICES

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Contents

The purpose of this module

This module covers three important topics that play an important role in reading development, namely oral language proficiency (Units 1-3), vocabulary development (Units 4-5) and motivation (Units 6-7).

- Key words are in bold. Keywords pertaining to the topics dealt with in this unit are explained, while the meanings of other key words common in the field of language and literacy studies and used throughout these modules are explained in a glossary that can be accessed independently from the SIRP website.
- A few self-assessment questions are given at the end of each unit. Do not be tempted to skip these! It is important to give yourself a quick test to see how well you are learning new knowledge as you work your way through each unit. If you can't answer the questions correctly, go back and read the relevant sections of the unit to ensure that you are building up a new knowledge base. This will help you to better understand the content in each new unit you read.
- Longer, more formal summative assessment questions are given at the end of each module. These will help you prepare for assignments and examinations.

Outcomes

After a thorough study of this module the student teacher should:

- understand what oral language is, and its relevance for reading with comprehension
- know and discuss why it is vital to teach this construct in preparation for reading
- understand how to teach oral language competency in the Foundation Phase classroom by using methods and strategies suggested in this subsection
- be able to choose and use relevant activities for teaching oral language in the Foundation Phase classroom
- demonstrate knowledge of appropriate assessment and use of the correct tools for assessment
- understand the importance of having a solid foundation of words (vocabulary) in order to promote literacy and reading
- be aware of different kinds of vocabulary
- be able to describe and apply the principles of vocabulary knowledge
- realise the importance for teachers to also have a rich vocabulary
- create a classroom environment which is conducive to learning and promotes a love for words and reading
- use the most effective methods to teach vocabulary systematically and effectively

- assess and evaluate learner achievement in the area of vocabulary in order to promote reading with comprehension in the Foundation Phase classroom
- describe theories and ideas that attempt to explain motivation during reading in the Foundation and Intermediate Phase classrooms
- engage with examples of teaching strategies that develop a motivated reader
- use learning tasks, reflective tasks and case studies to gain a deeper understanding of reading motivation
- demonstrate how they will assess reading motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic
- develop the habit of using pedagogical practices that enhance motivation to read in the Foundation and Intermediate Phase classroom.

What literacy teacher standards are covered?

This module covers several of the standards (or portions of them), though an assumption of general knowledge specified in the other standards is assumed. These knowledge standards relate to the knowledge of language and literacy that graduate teachers need to have to teach learners to read and write.

1. Demonstrate basic knowledge of the key components of language

1.1 Explanations can be given of six basic components found across languages: phonology, morphology, grammar, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

1.2 Essential simple language terms can be used.

1.3 A basic comparative knowledge of similarities and differences in the components across the SA languages.

2. Demonstrate knowledge of basic grammatical concepts that are necessary for language and literacy teaching

2.1. Knowledge of and the ability to explain the following grammatical features are demonstrated:

- 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)
- syntax (e.g., word order and the relationship between words and sentences)

2.2 Knowledge of when it is appropriate to teach elements of grammar

2.3 Basic differences in the grammatical structures of English and Afrikaans (as analytic or isolating languages) and African languages (as agglutinating languages) are identified and explained.

3. Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical and research-based foundations of home language acquisition and additional language learning

3.1 Explanations can be given about the differences and similarities between the natural acquisition of a home language and the formal learning of another language in an educational context (i.e. a FAL).

3.2 The implications of young learners speaking a different language or languages at home, how this may impact on their learning, and what this means for working with varied linguistic repertoires in the classroom can be discussed.

3.3 The implications of young learners learning non-cognate languages can be discussed.

3.4 Current theories of language acquisition can be applied in multilingual contexts of South African schools.

4. Demonstrate an understanding of the role of bi- and multilingualism and of standard and non-standard varieties of languages in communication and learning in South Africa

4.1 An understanding that learners have a variety of linguistic repertoires can be demonstrated.

4.2 An awareness of the importance of working with these varied repertoires to scaffold learning can be demonstrated.

4.3 The multilingual nature of the South African school system is recognised and its value described.

4.4 Concepts of bilingualism can be explained.

5. Demonstrate knowledge of the importance of oral language in literacy

5.1 The reciprocal relationship between spoken language and written language can be explained.

5.2 The distinction between the language of everyday Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and that of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) is described.

5.3 Ways of developing listening and speaking in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases are described.

5.4 The relationship between orality development and literacy development in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases is explained.

5.5 The importance of vocabulary development in home language and first additional language can be discussed.

5.6 The importance of reading aloud and its role in the encouragement of reading for pleasure can be articulated.

5.7 An understanding of varied oral genres and types from different cultures is demonstrated, e.g. praise poems, riddles, nursery rhymes.

10. Demonstrates phonological awareness including phonemic awareness

10.1 A basic awareness of the sounds of languages is displayed.

10.2 Definitions, explanations and demonstrations of phonological awareness (syllabification, onset and rime (onset and rime are important in English but not in agglutinating languages), and phonemic awareness) are given.

10.3 The use of activities such as phoneme isolation, identification, categorisation, addition, deletion, substitution, and segmentation is demonstrated.

10.4 An understanding of the developmental continuum of phonological awareness and an ability to use this knowledge in reading instruction appropriate to each grade and learner are demonstrated.

12. Demonstrate vocabulary and word study knowledge, e.g. know how to help learners extend vocabulary for communication and academic purposes

12.1 The role of vocabulary in learning across and beyond the curriculum in expanding the learner's conceptual world is articulated.

12.2 A variety of research-based ways to introduce and build new language and vocabulary in both home and additional languages (e.g., word study, word parts and word associations, etc.) throughout the curriculum and across different subjects and grade levels is described, including:

- Word features and their structures, for example, syllables, prefixes, infixes, suffixes, roots, inflections, etc., are explained.
- A list of high-frequency and sight words (words which should be instantly recognisable) for the grade level is presented.
- An appropriate vocabulary list with the words in the particular language that should be spoken and written by the end of a particular grade (and which consider necessary subject specific vocabularies) can be presented.

12.3 The distinction between expressive and receptive vocabulary is explained.

20. Display knowledge about writing genres and text types

20.1 Knowledge is demonstrated about appropriate literacy education texts in multiple genres, formats and degrees of complexity within various settings and cultural contexts, for various audiences considering learners' background knowledge, stage of reading development and any reading difficulties.

20.2 The purposes, functions and structure of various kinds and genres of texts (such as messages, stories, poems, and informational texts) are explained.

20.3 The ability to talk with learners meaningfully about the different genres is demonstrated.

20.4 Means of creating a classroom environment in which learners can communicate in writing using a range of genres, including creative writing, are described.

Unit 1: What is oral language development?

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to equip teachers with the relevant knowledge, attitudes, values and skills for developing learners' oral language. Activities for how to teach oral language will also be included. In this unit oral language is discussed and its importance and development are examined.

Background

Children come to school with the knowledge of words which they have acquired through hearing and speaking the language. These words are used for communication and for understanding when they listen and speak and will also be used during reading and writing when they start to read and write. Their knowledge of the language is critical for understanding and learning new information.

They have learned the use of words incidentally from communications with their parents, friends, family members and with whom they associate informally.. Through this incidental language they pick up the grammar of the language as well as its pragmatics (how it is used). All this can only take place if children are exposed to and immersed in the language where they can gain new words and develop language.

In school, teachers need to know how to develop their learners' language so that they can use and understand new topics and content in the classroom. Hence besides implicit learning through exposure, it becomes vital for learners also to be taught new aspects of the language explicitly. At school, language is developed through explicit learning where a teacher teaches a topic or aspects of a language deliberately with a clear aim and purpose.

We argue that it will be best for children in Foundation Phase to be taught in their **mother tongue** or **home language**, as it is the language that they are exposed to most and have become proficient in. In their home language, they can communicate their social and informational needs and above all, during their preschool years they develop a basic vocabulary, which forms the bedrock for learning to read and write.

Children at this stage know most of the high-frequency words (i.e., words that are appear frequently in written or spoken language), which they have acquired through interaction with parents, guardians and other adults and their peers because this is their first point of contact with language.

What is oral language development?

Oral language is the system through which we use spoken words to express knowledge, ideas, and feelings. Developing oral language means developing the skills and knowledge that go into listening and speaking.

Language is made up of at least six key components: p**honology, morphology, syntax, semantics** and **pragmatics**.

All of these components of oral language are necessary to communicate and learn through conversation and spoken interaction, but there are important distinctions among them that have implications for literacy instruction.

Oral language has components that relate to linguistic skills such as **phonemes**, semantics and syntax that are used in the language and are critical in preparation for reading.

In the school setting, the goal of oral language development is oral language proficiency (Department of Basic Education 2021:11):

> *Oral language proficiency refers to our ability to speak and understand a language appropriately and correctly. It relies on both conscious as well as unconscious knowledge we may have about the language. This includes vocabulary (knowledge of words and their meanings), as well as familiarity with the phonology (sounds), morphology (word structure) and syntax (language usage) of the language. Oral language proficiency is also reflected in listening comprehension and speaking ability.*
>
> *Oral language proficiency forms the basis of reading. In whatever language we read, we need to have some level of oral language proficiency in that language.*

Oral language proficiency goes hand in hand with reading ability because reading is a translation of oral language into print which is underpinned by knowledge of speech sounds, morphology, syntax and semantics. So oral language proficiency forms the basis of reading. In whatever language we read, we need to have some level of oral language proficiency in that language. What is considered proficient depends on the context in which language is used.

When children begin school, they bring their knowledge of their home language to the classroom This is called **Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills** (BICS) which is embedded in a social context. In other words, we use BICS to talk about the here-and-now and we use tone, pitch, facial and body gestures to help us convey meaning. BICS is based on oral language proficiency and is vital to kick start their learning. At this point, children know mainly common, everyday high-frequency words which they use to communicate their needs in the classroom.

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) is a more formal, less contextualised type of language that is used within formal learning contexts and school subjects and children must know how to use this language within these subjects. CALP is said to be more decontextualised than BICS in that the meaning must be clear even out of context. Take for example, a BICS sentence such as *Hey everyone, this is going to be fun!* From the context in which those present

when this was spoken can work out who the generic *everyone* refers to and what *this* is. If we convert this to a CALP register, we need to lexicalise the context (i.e. build the context into the language), for example: *Good morning, first-year BEd students! Welcome to today's lecture on oral language proficiency – this is going to be fun!*

BICS and CALP are thus different ways of using language (registers) in different contexts for different purposes. It is during teaching that teachers must be explicit in their language use so that children are able to learn a more formal, explicit register and use words and language correctly for the comprehension of what they are listening to or reading.

It is at this stage that children need to begin to have some knowledge about language (rather than simply using it). Research over the years has found that children require a variety of foundation literacy abilities before they can read with some level of fluency in order to understand texts (Ardington & Meiring 2020). One of those abilities is knowledge of language, as reflected in oral language proficiency. Knowledge of speech sounds, correct pronunciation, intonation and phoneme awareness are initial basics that children should master before they begin with decoding. Language knowledge provides the scaffolding for building the ability to read and write.

It is also important to point to a connection between the social and psychological domains which link to the development of language. It is in the experience of interacting with other that we learn the particular language and later then internalise the speech for self-directed mental activity which is vital for learning (Halliday 1975; Vygotsky 1978).

The following diagram shows the principles of language development in a classroom (Adapted from Zenex 2014):

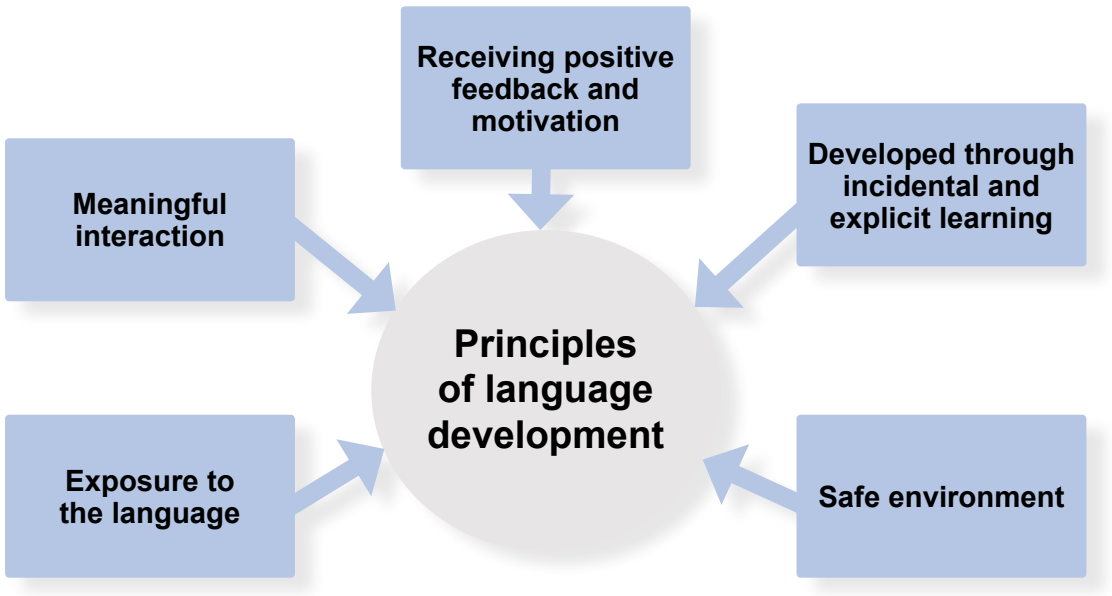


Figure 1: Principles of language development

Similar language development principles have been expressed by Konishi, Kanero, Freeman, Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek (2012: 406):

1. Children learn what they hear most.
2. Children learn words for things and events that interest them.
3. Interactive and responsive rather than passive contexts promote language learning.
4. Children learn words best in meaningful contexts.
5. Children need to hear diverse examples of words and language structures.
6. Vocabulary and grammatical development are reciprocal processes, i.e. vocabulary growth influences grammatical development and grammatical development facilitates vocabulary growth.

The importance of developing oral language in the classroom

Research around the world suggests that initial teaching to read is best done in the **home language** of the child. The Foundation Phase in schools generally adheres to this principle and it is only in the Intermediate Phase, in Grade 4, that the majority of South African schools adopt English as the language of instruction. This situation is complicated because in some areas, particularly Gauteng where the general environment is very multilingual, many children in a Foundation Phase classroom may not have their first language as the language of instruction, though they may have some familiarity with whatever language it is from the general environment. Some children also come from families where the parents speak different languages.

Whether the child in the Foundation Phase classroom is monolingual or bi- or multilingual, at school he or she will normally be expected to focus only on the **language of instruction**, which may or may not be the mother tongue of the majority of the children in the class. For example, a Setswana child may attend a school where Sesotho is the language of instruction in Foundation Phase because there is no Setswana primary school in the area. It must be expected that in many situations having a fully homogeneous class of mother tongue speakers of the language of instruction may not be possible. Foundation Phase teachers have to be sensitive to the difficulties of such a situation. (The situation is even more problematic in places where the class has English as the preferred *lingua franca* because there are too many home languages to accommodate or because the parents want English instruction because they imagine it will give the child an early advantage in life.)

Whatever the language situation, for most teachers the effective teaching of the language components when teaching listening and speaking is challenging.

It is very important for teachers in the Foundation Phase to adhere to the principles of developing oral language by ensuring that:

- children are immersed in the language

- the environment is safe for children to make mistakes as mistakes are a normal part of learning
- children get positive feedback
- children are able to practise the language at all times.

Children need a good mentor who models good language skills. That mentor is the teacher in the classroom. Dehaene (2020) reminds teachers that when working with children, they should ensure that children are actively engaged, that they are given positive and constructive feedback, that they practise pronunciation daily and that teachers know how to consolidate activities. Teachers should pay attention to children's language needs, and be patient with them, especially those who experience language barriers or those that are still developing the language. Teachers should do this systematically. The type of questions that they ask children is crucial for developing critical thinking and the use of new and difficult words in different contexts.

During the early years, Grades R to Grade 3, children are learning about the pragmatics of the language, in other words they learn how to use the language in particular ways and in particular contexts (and especially that of school learning).

Aspects of oral language development

There are a number of things that the teacher has to bear in mind when developing oral language proficiency in the early grades. Some of them are discussed below.

Teacher talk – quantity and quality

Teacher talk refers to the times when teachers talk to their class, either to teach them, discuss topics with them, ask questions, manage their activities or direct their behaviour. The quantity (how much they talk) and quality (how rich their language use) of teacher talk to which children are exposed can have a positive effect by helping them gain new vocabulary and language structures and thus improve their language proficiency.

Research by Hart and Risley (1995: 2012), who studied language use and interaction in families in the United States of America over several years, grouped the families into three socioeconomic categories based on parents' education, and occupation: higher income professional families (parents with degrees), middle income families (parents with high school qualification) and low income families (parents on welfare who did not complete school). Hart and Risley (2012) made the following findings:

- Children from all three family groups started to speak around the same time and developed basic structure and use of language.
- There were large differences in the amount (quantity) and the way (quality) parents from different family groups spoke to their children. Children in professional families heard many more words per hour, resulting in larger cumulative vocabularies.

- In professional families, children heard an average of 2,153 words per hour, while children in middle income families heard an average of 1,251 words per hour and children in low income families heard an average of 616 words per hour. This means that in a year children in professional families heard an average of 11 million words, while children in middle income families heard an average of 6 million words and children in welfare families heard an average of 3 million words. By age four, a child from a low income family could have heard 32 million words fewer than a classmate from a professional family.
- By age three, the observed cumulative vocabulary for children in the professional families was about 1,100 words. For children from middle income families, the observed cumulative vocabulary was about 750 words and for children from low income families it was just above 500 words.
- Children in professional families heard a higher ratio of encouragements to discouragements than their middle and low income peers.

While learners should hear an appropriate quantity of teacher talk, it is the quality of that talk that is also critical for the development of oral language. In other words, teachers must ensure that throughout the day, during numeracy, literacy and life skills, they use the home language in ways that are rich and varied, as this will have an impact on their learners' language proficiency and on their early reading development during listening and speaking time.

According to the *Curriculum and Assessment Statements* (CAPS), teachers are expected to teach listening and speaking for at least 15 minutes a day. This especially is the time when the teacher invests in the quality of the conversation, whether it is incidental conversation or explicit instruction. Teachers should engage the children in meaningful conversation that stimulates cognitive skills, develops vocabulary and models the use of grammar in sentences (Snow 2017).

Ninio and Snow (1996) showed that how well children develop conversational skills can influence how well they interact with others. Casual conversation on its own is not enough to develop children's listening and speaking – they also need planned conversation. This means that teacher-led conversation should be structured, planned and contain meaningful activities. A teacher needs to teach relevant oral activities explicitly. For example, she may want to teach the children how to use polite words or how to use new words related to a particular discipline in different contexts and in a correct way (Wasik & Iannone-Campbell 2012).

Teachers need to have **dialogues** with children, modelling good conversation skills such as introducing and developing a topic, turn taking, listening when someone else speaks and acknowledging their contribution. During these conversations teachers should ask **literal**, **inferential** questions and questions that will demand **higher order thinking** of the children. Such questions support the development of thinking skills and the conceptualisation of ideas based on a topic.

Teachers who teach children from poor environments have an important role to play in teaching

and developing language proficiency as these children will be negatively affected if their language of learning is not developed. Many children are multilingual and may be able to communicate in different languages. Some children may speak a regional dialect of their home language or an urban dialect comprising a mix of different languages spoken in their communities. It is important for a teacher to acknowledge the varied language skills of their learners and never denigrate them. However, the written language to which they will be exposed (the language of books and schooling) will be a more standardised version of their home language. It is important for children to also be exposed to this more formal language and be encouraged to become 'bilingual' in both the local and the more standardised versions of their home language.

Listening and memory

Auditory memory involves the ability to assimilate information, present it orally, to process that information, store it and recall what has been heard.

Auditory memory is important for processing smaller units of language such as words, syllables and phonemes, as well as larger chunks of information in discourse, such as statements, commands, request and questions. Children should be able to retrieve the language items from their long-term memory store. But for this to happen children need to be exposed to language so that they can detect large phonological units such as words and phrases. This will later help them to manipulate phonemes when they learn to read.

It is through conversation activities and teacher explanations that children begin to be aware of words, syllables and phonemes in speech. Auditory memory activities equip children with the skill of remembering what they have heard, read, and learned in the classroom. The strengthening of auditory memory relies on language development. Auditory memory activities prepare children to process and recall words, sentences, and paragraphs in the stories or conversations they have. For example, a teacher tells the class *Please put away your exercise books, and come to the front of the class quietly, starting with Group 1. We are going to do Shared Reading*.

There are at least five important pieces of information in this instruction that need to be processed and held in memory. Children with auditory memory problems might only process and hold in memory the first two chunks of information (put away your exercise book and come to the front of the class), and fail to process the rest, not because they are naughty or disobedient, but because their auditory processing is not yet fast and efficient to hold it all in memory. It is important for teachers to bear this in mind, and initially give instructions in smaller chunks, only a single instruction at a time and then pause briefly, with enough time for the children to process the information, think about what is being said and how they are going to respond to the instruction. This is only possible if they are familiar with the routine of school learning.

> *Class, please put away your exercise books. [PAUSE]*
>
> *We are now going to do Shared Reading. [PAUSE].*

That means you all come to the front of the class quietly, according to groups. [PAUSE] We will start with Group 3.

Phonological processing

Phonological processing refers to the speed and agility with which we make use of our knowledge of the sounds of our language in order to process spoken and written language (Wagner & Torgesen 1987; Jorm & Share 1983). The broad category of **phonological processing includes phonological awareness, phonological working memory** and **phonological retrieval.**

All three components of phonological processing are important for speech production as well as for the development of spoken and written language skills.

It is important and necessary to monitor the spoken and written language development of children with phonological processing difficulties.

Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness is the awareness of the sound structure of a language and the ability to consciously analyse and manipulate this structure. Phonological awareness involves the detection and manipulation of sounds at various levels of sound structure in the language at the word, syllable and phoneme level. For example, in English hearing rhymes (*cat, fat, mat, sat* all rhyme), syllables (*cat* has one syllable), onsets and rimes (/f/ is the onset and /-at/ the rime), and phonemes (/f/, /a/, /t/) is important. In African languages, syllables, phonemes and tone are important. Phonological awareness enables the **segmentation** of speech into words, syllables and their component speech sounds and the **blending** of sounds into syllables and words.

Phonological awareness is the broad umbrella term. It includes awareness of rhyme, alliteration, tone and syllables, as well as **phonemic awareness**, which applies to individual speech sounds, called **phonemes**, that occur within words and syllables.

Phonological and phonemic awareness are **metalinguistic** skills, requiring conscious awareness and reflection on the structure of language. Metalinguistic skills enable us to think *about* language.

Through oral activities children gain phonological awareness of words, which in turn impacts on their understanding and pronunciation of words. Phonological awareness makes them sensitive to the sound structure of the language, identifying the individual sounds of one's language, being able to pronounce the words, store them in working memory and later be able to access or retrieve the lexical storage (Bus & van IJzendoorn 1999). But this cannot happen without the development of oral language and being given constructive feedback on how they use it.

Phonemic awareness is a strong predictor of learning to read in alphabetic writing systems, because the letters of the alphabet generally represent individual sounds in spoken language. Early reading programmes that combine phonological, phonemic and letter training are more effective than purely phonological training. Children may become good at syllable awareness but

this is not a sufficient condition for early reading. It is the development of phonemic awareness that really helps them break through into literacy.

Phonological working memory

Phonological working memory involves storing phoneme information in a temporary memory store called 'working memory' (Wagner and Torgesen, 1987). This phonemic information is then readily available for manipulation during phonological awareness tasks.

Phonological retrieval

Phonological retrieval is the ability to recall the phonemes associated with specific graphemes, which can be assessed by rapid naming tasks (e.g., rapid naming of letters). This ability to recall the speech sounds in one's language is also integral to phonological awareness.

Phonological awareness facilitates learning to read and helps to develop phonemic awareness where learners become sensitive to individual sounds within words, to orally segment words into phonemes and learn the relationship between letters and sounds (Bus & van IJzendoorn 1999). A rapid automatised naming (RAN) test (described in Module 1) measures phonological processing.

Activities that draw children's attention to the syllables and individual sounds in the language help to develop phonological awareness. When children develop phonological sensitivity, they first detect larger phonological units such as words and syllables and later they identify and then manipulate phonemes within words orally (Posthumus 2019). Phonological awareness and phonemic awareness grow when children are taught to identify and manipulate phonemes in words. There are many fun ways to do this. Initially, this can be done orally before children are taught the sound-grapheme relationships in phonics lessons.

Children's auditory skills are developed through language interactions so that when they begin to read, write and spell, they perceive words more analytically and are mindful of phonemes within words. Phonemic awareness is critical in developing early reading since it allows children to associate sounds with letters. When children understand that words comprise smaller units or individual sounds, and that words can be segmented, they can then be taught to match sounds in words with printed letters, which will enable a sounding out (i.e. blending) process for written words.

Self-assessment activities

These are 'quickie' assessment activities to check how well you have understood key concepts discussed in this unit and whether you are able to perceive the pedagogical implications of such concepts in the teaching of reading.

Note: The key to these self-assessment activities is given in the Appendix at the end of this module. If you score less than 6/8 (75%) for these questions you are advised to re-read the unit

again to strengthen your content and pedagogic knowledge.

1. In each of the statements below provide **the appropriate missing word (or words)**. (5)

   a) The kind of contextualised oral language we use to talk about everyday things and the 'here-and-now' is referred to as _____.

   b) _____ is an umbrella term for awareness of rhyme, syllables and phonemes in words.

   c) The statement 'Children learn what they hear most" is related to the principle of language development referred to as _____, as shown in Figure 1 of Unit 1.

   d) The instances when teachers talk to their class, either to teach them, discuss topics with them, ask questions, manage their activities and direct their behaviour is referred to as _____.

   e) Skills that require conscious awareness of and reflection on language are referred to as _____ skills.

2. Indicate which one of the following statements is **false**. (1)

   a) The key components of language are phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics.

   b) In African languages phonological processing does not include phonemes because these languages are syllabic.

   c) Children who struggle learning to read often have problems with phonological processing.

   d) It is important for reading teachers to be aware of the phonology of a language because alphabetic writing systems represent spoken language phonologically.

3. Indicate which of the following statements is the correct one. (1)

   a) Phonology refers to how the sounds of one language differ from another.

   b) Morphology refers to the way that words are pronounced.

c) Semantics refers to the way that words follow one another in a sentence.

d) Pragmatics refers to the way in which language is used in communication.

4. Consider the following scenario and then indicate which one of the options is **an inaccurate reflection** of the basic principles of language development. (1)

*The theme during the week is **Our body**. During a Listening and Speaking lesson with her Grade 1 learners, Teacher Thandi has a large poster of a boy and a girl in uniform with labels showing the different parts of the body. The learners sit on the mat around her chair where they can all see the poster properly. around her chair. When she discusses the poster with her learners she points to different body parts (e.g. head, eyes, nose, legs, elbow, thumb, knee, etc.) and asks individual learners to name them by saying This is my _____or These are my _____. If a learner gives an incorrect answer she thanks them for trying and gives the correct answer, then asks them to repeat the correct answer. She also asks them if anyone has ever hurt or broken a body part and encourages 2-3 to learners to describe what happened and how they felt. She ends the lesson by putting the poster away and then asking them all to stand, then when she says a word that refers to a body part, they must all point to the relevant part on their body and repeat the word.*

a) The teacher develops the learners' Home Language through meaningful interaction.

b) By getting the learners to sit on the mat the teacher has created a passive learning context.

c) By thanking her learners for trying when they give wrong answers the teacher helps create a safe classroom environment for language development.

d) The teacher provides corrective feedback to learners' responses.

Unit 2: Teaching oral language proficiency in the Foundation Phase classroom

Introduction

This unit focuses on the importance of oral language for reading development and provides suggestions for supporting oral language developing in the classroom. Ways of assessing oral language are also briefly discussed.

The importance of oral language for reading development

The development of oral language emerges from the child's physical and social environment. This develops into their adult language. The conversations that children have with others contribute to their oral language skills, skills which they should have when they begin schooling.

The research by Spira, Bracken and Fischel (2005) found that children's competence in basic oral language skills contributed to their capacity for reading development. However, although strong oral proficiency is associated with early reading success, children also need to be taught how to decode written language as oral language proficiency on its own cannot compensate for poor decoding.

The environment for developing oral language is critical, both at home and at school. The teacher needs to be aware that children come from different backgrounds and that they use language differently. Teachers should help children to develop language by using what they bring into the classroom as a starting point and **scaffold** their development of language using different activities. For example, if a child reports that she has a new baby brother at home, the teacher can use that opportunity to discuss topics such as siblings, relationships, caring for a baby and feelings of love and jealousy – this is part of incidental learning. It is also very important that the teacher knows her class and their abilities so that she can make the classroom a place where learning takes place without demoralising those who are weak in language.

The Curriculum and Assessment Statement (CAPS) on home language in the Foundation Phase (English 2011a: 10; isiZulu 2011b: 12; Sesotho 2011c: 12) highlights that:

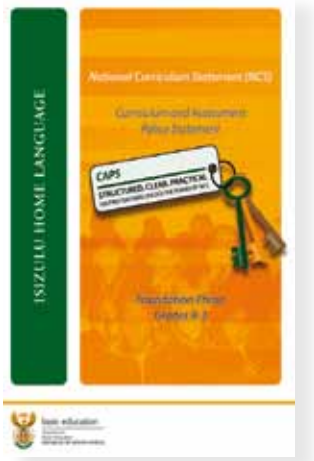
> *…children are constantly developing their listening and speaking skills not only during language teaching but, also during other subjects, so it is also advisable that teachers should not only use fiction story books but engage children through information texts so that they can learn to use the subject specific language in different conversations.*

Teaching that supports oral language development

The main guide on what to do and when to do in relation to oral language development in your teaching is the official ***Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)*** (Department of Basic Education 2011). The main lesson that supports oral language development is Listening and Speaking.

Teaching the Listening and Speaking component

Consider these Listening and Speaking activities in the CAPS document (English 2011a: 23; isiZulu and Sesotho 2011b, 2011c: 25).



Grade R
• Listens to stories and acts these out • Listens and responds to simple questions • Listens to and repeats rhythmic patterns, and copies correctly • Listens to and recalls simple word sequences in order (e.g. big, beg, bag) • Names and points to parts of the body • Sings simple songs and does action rhymes • Talks about pictures in posters, theme charts, books etc • Matches and sorts things according to shape, colour, etc • Participates in discussion and ask questions
Grade 1
• Listens to stories and expresses feelings about the story • Listens to instructions and announcements and responds appropriately • Listens without interrupting, taking turns to speak and asking questions for clarification • Listens, enjoys and responds to picture and word puzzles, riddles and jokes • Talks about personal experiences and feelings • Tells a familiar story which has a beginning, middle and end • Answers closed and open-ended questions • Role plays different situations • Participates in class discussions • Uses terms such as sentence, capital letters and full stop

Grade 2
• Listens to stories and poems and answers higher-order questions • Listens to a complex sequence of instructions and responds appropriately • Listens without interrupting, showing respect for the speaker, asking questions and commenting on what was heard • Talks about personal experiences and more general news • Tells a story that has a beginning, middle and end • Expresses feelings about a story or poem and gives reasons • Answers open-ended questions and justifies answer • Makes up own rhymes • Role plays different situations • Participates in discussions, and reports back on the group's work • Uses terms such as noun, adjective, verb, pronoun, preposition, comma, question marks and paragraph.
Grade 3
• Listens for the main idea and for detail in stories and answers open-ended questions • Listens to a story and works out cause and effect • Expresses feelings about a text and gives reasons • Listens to a complex sequence of instructions and responds appropriately • Engages in conversation as a social skill, accepting and respecting the way others speak • Makes an oral presentation (e.g. tells personal news, describes something experienced, recounts an event) • Tells a short story with a simple plot and different characters • Uses language imaginatively (e.g. tells jokes and riddles) • Interviews people for a particular purpose • Uses terms such as subject, verb, object, question, statement, command, synonym, antonym, exclamation mark

For more activities, you can check the CAPS document. There are different activities for each term – some are a continuation of previous tasks and some are new topics.

Another source of useful information is the ***National Framework for the Teaching of Reading in African Languages in Foundation Phase*** (Department of Basic Education 2020). Though more up to date in its approach to teaching reading in the African languages it still conforms to the CAPS timetabling hours and teaching methods.

This is its section (2020:88-89) on Listening and Speaking.

Language Component	**Listening and Speaking**
What is it?	Listening involves listening to stories told and read aloud, listening to instructions, for example during interactions, and classroom discussions. Speaking can take place during classroom interaction, for example, during discussions and when responding to questions and text. It can also be part of more formal activities such as oral presentations, drama, storytelling by learners and giving a recount of a story or their own experiences. Listening and speaking complement one another, but they are two different skills, which must be taught. Listening and speaking are core to language development and acquisition. Listening and speaking cut across reading and writing lessons and all other subjects in the curriculum.
Why is it important?	Listening to oral texts and texts read aloud is core to language development. It provides learners with rich exposure to language, which enables them to develop vocabulary and concepts, knowledge of language structure and the structure of texts. Speaking provides practice in using language and gives learners opportunities to communicate and express themselves effectively.
When is it done?	It happens throughout the school day in all lessons. However, focussed listening and speaking activities (see below) should take place in the language lesson and for 15 minutes at least 3 times a week.

How to do Listening and Speaking activities	Listening and speaking activities are often whole class oral activities at the beginning of the school day, usually in the morning with the focus on the weather, attendance, date, children's birthdays, and personal news. However, listening and speaking must also be taught explicitly. Focussed activities in the language lessons include listening to a story told or read, retelling a story, listening and following instructions, singing songs and performing role-play, show and tell and discussion of a topic related to a theme. These activities can be done as the whole class, in groups or in pairs. Listening and speaking activities are also taught in an integrated way with Life Skills Study Areas (Beginning Knowledge and Performing Arts).
How to assess Listening and Speaking?	Listening and speaking skills can be assessed both formally and informally through observation. For formal assessment, it is helpful to provide a rubric to ensure that the assessment is focussed, objective and fair. Listening can also be assessed through writing, for example, learners can retell parts of a story that they have listened to.
Resources	• Conversational posters • DBE Workbook • Library books and non-fiction books • Readers • Anthology, poems, songs, play scripts • Real objects, masks, puppets
How to identify cracks in Listening and Speaking	The learner lacks confidence and cannot verbalise his/her thoughts related to a personal experience, the weather, topical events or a story that is told or read to the class.
Remember	All learners irrespective of their language proficiency in the LOLT must be given adequate opportunity and support to express themselves verbally.

Rules and guidelines for Listening and Speaking

It is crucial for teachers in the Foundation Phase to teach learners rules that govern social interaction before and during the Listening and Speaking activities, and this should start as early as Grade R. Teachers can use the rules listed below to help children to develop social interaction skills during listening and speaking:

Table 1: Rules for social interaction

Conversation involves taking turns – do not talk all the time, give someone else a turn
The teacher can start by explaining these rules to her children and ask them questions such as *Why is it important to use these rules?* The teacher should also allow children to contribute to the discussion so that they own what is being shared in the classroom. This may convince children to respect the rules because they were part of the decision when they were set. The following are some of the habits that could be instilled in children as they learn to take turns when someone is speaking:
Listen to the person who is speaking
Often, we do not really listen because we are thinking about what we want to say next. One should be able to repeat what has been said by a speaker.
Respond appropriately when asked a question or asked to say or report on something
Answer the actual question! Stick to the subject of the conversation! Obey formal rules of address!
Respond with a question or request when you do not understand something that has been said
The teacher needs to explain how to politely ask a person to repeat what they have said or explain it in more detail or to clarify something.
Be able to start a conversation
Conversation starters are important, both for children and teachers, because appropriate questions can lead to conversations that develop knowledge about the person, enhance friendly relationships, express gratitude, develop empathy, imagination, mental strength, ethical thinking, and confidence as a speaker.
Know how to use your voice during listening and speaking
Relevant aspects include voice, tone, intonation, pitch, pause, and pronunciation.
Know about appropriate body language during listening and speaking
Children should learn about what is an appropriate proximity to another speaker, appropriate eye contact (and the different rules about eye contact in different cultures, particularly in relation to children or subordinates and body position – sitting or standing).

It is vital that the teacher models these behaviours.

Helping children to express ideas orally in a clear and systematic manner supports the development of thinking skills and the conceptualisation of ideas, based on what they have heard or read. For example, if you ask a child *What did you do this weekend, Lerato?* and the child responds *TV!*, this is a typical BICS form of language use. Get them to 'change gear' into a CALP register by asking them to reply again using a full sentence *This weekend I ……*

Doing conversational dialogue activities

There are a number of reading activities that can be based on dialogues, such as reading aloud or storytelling. Here are steps the teacher can use to plan a dialogic lesson, where she starts a dialogue related to a book she is reading to the children:

Table 2: Steps in planning a lesson with dialogues

Step 1
• Think about the story that you are going to read to the children: Will the story lend itself to an interesting dialogue? • Are you going to use a big book or small book? Are you going to use a data projector to show the text on the wall or screen? As a teacher you need to think carefully about the resources that you will use for the lesson. • The resources that you use should enhance learning and not be a distraction. • Plan the questions that you will ask before storytelling, during storytelling and after storytelling. • Identify new words that the children might not know, write these down either on a flashcard or on the board or project them. Add the new words to the vocabulary wall in your classroom so that the children can see and read the words repeatedly.
Step 2
• Tell the children the title of the story. For example, after choosing a book about the jobs people do called, *'What is the most important job?'* you could start by saying "Today we will read the book called ***"What is the most important job?***" • Ask them questions that will elicit their prior knowledge about the words or topic. The teacher could ask questions like: *"What jobs do you know about?"; "What tasks are more important than others?"* • Give them an opportunity to talk about their answers and their thoughts, be mindful of their auditory processing; children must be given enough time to process what they have heard before responding. Questions should not be long, and should be one question at a time, not several questions in one. Do not be quick to provide them with an answer. Respond to their answers, engaging in a dialogue with them.

Step 3

- Read or tell the story to the children using the correct tone, speed, intonation, posture, projection and voice. This will make it easier for them to understand as they think and visualise what you are saying to them.
- Engage your learners by asking them questions that relate to the story.
- Promote high-order thinking by asking not just literal questions but also questions that compel children to think beyond the text. This helps children to use the language and vocabulary that they have acquired in context.

Strategies and methods to develop language skills

The following are strategies and methods that the teacher can use during language development activities. These can be done especially during Listening and Speaking, Shared Reading and Read Alouds. In fact, many of the strategies can be applied in any lesson, including Numeracy and Life Skills.

Teachers need to be aware of any cultural expectations or behaviours that may influence learners' participation during listening and speaking. In some cultures, children are not allowed to question or ask clarity seeking questions to adults. The teacher must mediate a solution drawback by, for example, explaining that school is for learning and in the classroom it is acceptable for children to ask questions.

Prior knowledge

Ask children questions that will trigger their prior knowledge. For example, if the topic or poster discussion is about jobs that are important, the teacher can ask children to mention the jobs that they think are important and give reasons for their answers. They may know what jobs their parents do. They may have seen people doing jobs.

Understanding of text

In a Read Aloud or Shared Reading lesson, the teacher can:

- read the story
- ease understanding and build vocabulary by using a range of similar words – synonyms
- discuss time, places, characters, events, etc.
- discuss the main event, issue or problem
- ask how the story ends or is resolved or concluded
- discuss what the main or big idea was in the story.

Problem solving skills

When discussing a theme topic or reading a story, the teacher can give learners a problem to solve, they can look for common problems, finding clues that will help them solve the problem, etc. These are some of the questions that she can ask the children:

- What is the problem or challenge in the story? (Or, what are problems related to our discussion of the weather theme?)
- How was it resolved?
- State or create a new problem for the learners to discuss and resolve.
- Allow them to resolve problems. They may come up with different solutions to the problem.

Analyse, synthesise and evaluate information

Provide specific oral language opportunities within the normal daily work of the learners. Involve them in meaningful discussions that ask them to give their own opinions about what they have heard and to give reasons for their answers. During this time, the teacher acts as an agent of change and an evaluator. She needs to think carefully about how she gives the children feedback as her feedback can make or break them.

Challenging thinking

During children's oral presentations it is very important for a teacher to challenge the children's thinking. This can be done by asking the following questions:

- Ask the children to elaborate on other points related to the topic. For example: *When you were talking about pollution you said that we all contribute in small ways in our everyday lives. What did you mean by that? Could you please share some examples of this with the class, Sipho?*
- Help the children to learn how to ask clarity seeking questions. For example: *Today, Nhlanhla will be presenting his volcano model to us, please write down two questions that you might want to ask for clarity and note that you will only ask your questions after his presentation.*
- Prompt them to give a reason for their point, to justify their points with evidence. For example: *Why do you think people litter? And why do you say so, can you provide us with some examples?*
- Allow them to compare and contrast events in their story and show similarities and differences. For example: *Some people throw all their rubbish away together, and some people sort it into different kinds (plastics, glass, paper, food). What are the advantages and disadvantages of dealing with rubbish in this way?*

Apply information and ideas

- Get the learners to say/show how they apply what they have learned to their everyday lives. For example: *Many households have only one rubbish bin. How is your family managing the rubbish?* and *How could you do things differently from now on?*

Teaching a variety of spoken genres

Both in reading and writing development the teacher should introduce the learners to appropriate texts in different genres, formats and degrees of complexity within various settings, cultural

contexts and audiences, considering learners' background knowledge, stage of reading development and any reading difficulties.

Children's knowledge of genres will be influenced by their home literacy environment. The learners will learn about the different genres and text types through what the teacher reads to them. They can then choose what they want to read and write. Written genres are dealt with in greater detail after the Foundation Phase.

(See Wikipedia entry for List of writing genres: *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ List_of_writing_genres*.)

Teaching the oral report genre

The teacher can ask children to give an oral report about a familiar topic e.g. reporting on a story read to them by the teacher.

The teacher should model how to give an oral report before getting the children to do the activity. For example: *My report is about an important job. I will explain why this job is important, how you can study towards this job and how this job can benefit the community.*

You need to show children how to begin the presentation of a report, how to talk about the details, which include ideas that are relevant to the topic, and how to conclude such a presentation.

If parents assist children to prepare a report, the teacher needs to give learners a checklist or a **rubric** to follow.

Assessing oral language development

Foundation Phase assessments are in most instances baseline, diagnostic and formative, with little summative assessment. The assessment methods are usually mostly oral or demonstration.

Baseline assessment is used to establish what the current state of the children's knowledge is with any particular aspect of oral language. This is usually done at the beginning of the school year. Teachers are encouraged to start with baseline assessments to establish the children's knowledge and competence in oral language as a whole or a particular aspect of it. This type of assessment will enable the teacher to focus on the areas that need attention. It can also be used to place learners in ability groups. A general baseline assessment of oral language proficiency is very useful at the beginning of the year. Because many teachers have large classes of 40 or more learners, this is not always feasible. In such cases, it is more practical for teachers to assess only those children who seem to struggle to express themselves.

Diagnostic assessment is used at various times during the year but often before the beginning of a new unit, lesson, or term. It is meant to help the teacher understand the learners' current level of knowledge or skill so that she can adjust and revise her plan of instruction accordingly. The goal of diagnostic assessment is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the learners so that areas that need improvement can be concentrated on.

Both these types of assessment are typical of **formative assessment**, that is, assessment that helps in the formation of knowledge and skills during the course of instruction (as distinct from **summative assessment** which sums up the achievement of the learners at the end of the course or programme).

Strategies and tools for assessment

A teacher can use a variety of strategies to assess oral language development in class.

- **Direct observation**, a strategy that can provide the teacher with clear information about the children's progress.
- Children's **retelling of stories** will assist the teacher to understand how they use and manipulate language to show understanding.
- **Anecdotal records**. The teacher can observe the children's talking behaviours in different settings and how they engage during listening and speaking activities. During break time, the teacher can sit next to children and observe how they interact with one another. She can also be part of conversations, in a friendly way. It is during such times that the teacher can assess the children's talking behaviours like using polite words, taking turns, starting a conversation properly, etc.
- The **phonemic and phonological awareness activities** should should be fun, to encourage learner participation. However, if a teacher notices that a child struggles to participate then she should spend some time with the child (e.g. 5 minutes before school, or while the class is doing a writing activity) and assess their syllable and phonemic awareness to see where the problem lies.

It is important for teachers to keep written records of assessments done with learners, even if the assessment is done orally. Tools that teachers can use for assessing include:

- **Checklists** can be used or developed by teachers that list certain criteria that the children should have reached, for example performance on a short vocabulary test or a phonemic awareness test.
- **Tracking sheets** collect information based on the learners' progress and behaviour over time (and they can be used to record the results of checklist use).
- A tracking sheet is mainly for checking progress with regard to a particular skill: for example, if a child is struggling to repeat what has been said or mispronounces words, then a teacher can track that and write a report which can also be sent to the local clinic for administering a hearing test if necessary.
- **Rubrics** are a special type of checklist that lists the potential observable behaviour (related to the curriculum) with a scoring scale for marking the level of achievement. Rubrics are best designed by the teacher because it will be addressing the relevant skills that she will be focusing on for assessment, which will be based on specific tasks.

Self-assessment activities

Do these are 'quickie' assessment activities to check how well you have understood key concepts discussed in this unit and whether you are able to perceive the pedagogical implications of such concepts in the teaching of reading.

Note: The key to these self-assessment activities is given in the Appendix at the end of this module. If you score less than 6/8 (75%) for these questions you are advised to re-read the unit again to strengthen your content and pedagogic knowledge.

1. In each of the statements below provide **the appropriate missing word (or words)**. (5)

   a) Asking a question such as *Tell us about your visit to the zoo last week, Lerato* is an example of an _____ question, while a question such as *Show me the picture of a giraffe, Lerato* while the teacher holds up two pictures (one of a giraffe, the other of a zebra) is an example of a _____ question.

   b) Giving children practice in different oral _____ such as the oral report or procedural 'How to do/make something' are important for their language development.

   c) Assessments that are done at the beginning of a period (e.g. year/term) are called _____ assessments while on-going informal assessments throughout the term are _____ assessments and help to inform teaching.

2. Indicate which one of the following statements is **false**. (1)

   a) In multilingual countries, many children learn to read in a dominant language of the area in which they live.

   b) In multilingual countries, children should ideally be taught to read in their home language.

   c) In multilingual countries, it is easier for children to learn to read in a language with which they are familiar than in one which they do not know.

   d) In multilingual countries, children should be taught to read in the language that will ultimately serve as the LoLT.

3. Indicate which of the following statements is the correct one. (1)

a) The genre of oral reports like reporting on a story read by a teacher starts in Grade 2 as Grade 1s are still too young to do oral reports.

b) Children's development of conversational skills in the classroom may influence the quality of interaction they have with other people beyond the classroom.

c) Assessment of oral language proficiency is informal and does not require written records.

d) Since some children may experience difficulties remembering a sequence of instructions, this means that teachers should not give learners more than one instruction.

4. Consider the following scenario and then indicate which one of the options **is irrelevant to or an inaccurate reflection** of this scenario. (1)

Teacher Nhlanhla is discussing how to make a cup of tea with his Grade 1 learners in Listening and Speaking. He has brough a kettle, a tea cup, a tea bag, a jug of milk, a sugar bowl and a teaspoon as resources. After asking his learners who drinks coffee or tea in their homes, and who makes it, he explains that they are now going to focus on how to use language to explain to a friendly visitor from outer space (who knows nothing about drinking tea) how to make a nice cup of tea. He tells them that time words such as ***first, then, after*** *etc help us explain things in their proper order. He also provides language frames for this activity such as "****First****, you put water in the kettle and ....", "****Then*** *you ....", "****After that****, you ....", "****Thereafter,*** *you ....", "If you like it sweet, you can* ***then****...", "****Finally****, you ……", "Mmm, isn't that delicious!". Each action is accompanied by appropriate gestures and movement. The learners then get into groups (with one of them in each group being the space visitor), and they practise explaining to the visitor how to make a cup of tea. Teacher Nhlanhla walks between the groups, listening and providing corrective feedback on clear language use and correct sequence.*

a) The teacher provides learners with explicit instruction on an oral genre that requires children to pay attention to sequence.

b) By getting his learners to practise how to explain an ordinary procedure such as making a cup of tea, the teacher has provided fun opportunities for learning new words.

c) The teacher has contextualised an oral language activity in Listening and Speaking in a meaningful way.

d) The teacher has provided his learners with opportunities to practice turn-taking in conversation.

Unit 3: Teaching phonological awareness

Introduction

There is a close relationship between oral language, phonological awareness and early reading, and in the early Foundation Phase, attention must be given to developing phonological awareness.

This unit focuses on the broader concept of phonological awareness and its components, namely syllable awareness and phonemic awareness.

The importance of phonological awareness

Children need to understand that words are made up of individual sounds. This understanding, this awareness, is called phonological awareness.

Phonological awareness is an individual's awareness of the phonological (or sound) structure of their oral language, in processing oral and written information (Jorm & Share 1983; Wagner & Torgesen 1987). When children have phonological sensitivity, they can distinguish phonological units such as words, syllables and phonemes. The term phonological awareness is thus an umbrella term that involves the detection and manipulation of sounds at various levels of sound structure – at the word, syllable and phonemic (individual sound) level. It is a **metalinguistic** skill, requiring conscious awareness and reflection on the structure of language.

It is important for learning to read because it develops phonemic awareness where learners become sensitive to individual phonemes, the sounds within words, to the oral segmentation of words into phonemes, and learning the relationship between letters and sounds (Bus & IJzendoorn 1999).

Phonemic awareness is one of the strongest predictors for learning to read in alphabetic writing systems, because the letters of the alphabet represent the individual sounds of spoken language, its phonemes. Teaching children to identify and manipulate phonemes in words can be done orally initially before children are taught the **phoneme-grapheme** relationships, in other words phonics teaching.

Phonological and especially phonemic awareness lays an important foundation for **phonics** and ultimately for **decoding**. It is helpful to introduce a child to phonological awareness at an early age – as early as Grade R. Phonological sensitivity can even start in the preschool years. Parents, guardians and older siblings sometimes teach children aspects of phonological awareness without realising that they are teaching phonological awareness. Correcting a child's mispronunciation of words or playing games such as *I see something that starts with the sound /b/, what is it?* or rhyming games in English and Afrikaans are examples of developing phonological awareness. Sensitising young children to the fact that a word comprises individual sounds in a particular

sequence, and teaching them to identify and manipulate these sounds, is beneficial for them when they start learning to read.

Developing phonological awareness in the classroom

Phonological awareness focuses primarily on identifying, segmenting, and blending syllables or sounds in spoken words. Other operations such as substitution, omission and reduplication of sounds can also be used to hone the child's phonological awareness skills.

Phonics on the other hand focuses on the relationship between spoken and written language. Phonics is about the way spoken language is represented in written language using a set of symbols (the letters of the alphabet) and conversely how written words can be transformed back to spoken form to grasp the message contained in them. Before children are taught the relationship between the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they represent, they should ideally already have knowledge about the existence of speech sounds in words and the skills to manipulate these sounds. Formal phonics instruction starts in Grade 1, but phonological and phonemic awareness activities can be introduced as soon as in Grade R.

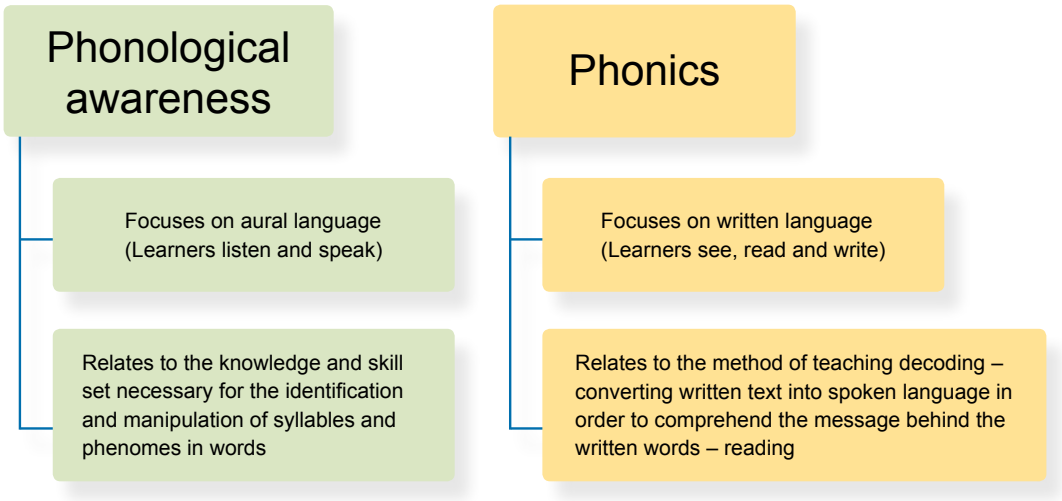


Figure 2: Differences between phonological awareness and phonics

The basic unit of language is the sentence. Sentences comprise clauses and clauses in turn consist of words. Words are the smallest language unit with independent meaning. When teaching phonological awareness in preparation for reading, teachers need to focus on words, their pronunciation, and meaning as the starting point. Learners must be then made aware of how a spoken word can be broken down into individual syllables and phonemes. Later on (in Grade 2 and 3) they also need to take cognisance of the fact that a word comprises **morphemes** (smaller meaningful parts). Morphology is particularly relevant for agglutinating languages, since they are characterised by a rich morphology, which implies that the form and meaning of a word can be modified or extended by the use of affixes – prefixes, infixes and/or suffixes.

Reading entails both constrained (i.e. finite, limited) skills and unconstrained (open-ended, infinite, always growing) skills. The constrained skills include phonological and phonemic awareness, and letter-sound knowledge (understanding the relationship between letters and sounds), while the unconstrained skills include vocabulary and reading comprehension. Unconstrained skills rely on the prior establishment of constrained skills. This is why the constrained reading skills should be mastered by the end of Grade 1, while the unconstrained skills continue to develop throughout our lives. The Grade 1 benchmark requiring learners to be able to sound out 40 letter-sounds in a minute is an example of setting a mastery standard for letter-sound knowledge. This was because longitudinal research (research that tracks the same learners over several years) of thousands of children in South Africa showed that children who knew fewer letter-sounds had great difficulty reading words in Grade 2 and consistently struggled with reading comprehension throughout Foundation and Intermediate Phase. In other words, they could not catch up because they lacked the necessary constrained decoding skills on which reading comprehension depends.

General activities teachers can use to teach phonological and phonemic awareness

The following activities were adapted from Schatschneider, Francis, Foorman, Fletcher and Merta (1999) and Posthumus (2019):

- Sound comparison – identifying and matching the names of objects beginning with the same sound or different sounds
- Distinguishing between vowel and consonant
- Identifying similar and different sounds
- Segmenting words into syllables or phonemes – breaking up a word into its constituent syllables and sounds
- Blending syllables or phonemes into words – joining together syllables or phonemes to form words
- Deleting a syllable or phoneme and saying the word that remains after omitting the syllable/phoneme
- Substituting (replacing) a syllable or phoneme with another syllable/phoneme in the word to change the meaning.

Phonological awareness skills involving syllables

Children tend to develop awareness of larger units such as syllables before smaller units such as phonemes. It is not surprising therefore that learners generally find syllable-based tasks easier and do better in them compared to phoneme-based activities. This is particularly so in African languages, probably because syllables are aurally salient and the syllable structure is quite simple (Vowel (V) or Consonant plus Vowel (CV)). Teachers in African language classrooms often mistakenly tend to focus more on syllables than on phonemes because they are so salient.

However, African languages are alphabetic languages, which means that letters represent sounds at the phonemic level, so bear in mind that phonemic awareness is also very important.

Application exercises involving syllables can strengthen phonological skills, especially if teachers start with easy activities and progress to more complex and difficult ones. The guidelines below should be borne in mind when teaching phonological awareness with syllables:

- Learners have an intuitive knowledge of syllables. Thus, start with the activities involving syllables, before moving to phoneme operations because syllables are easier for children to hear.
- A syllable is a natural break within the word where the speaker will insert a short pause (after a vowel) when pronouncing a word, for example si-ya-se-be-nza > siyasebenza.
- Syllables should be distinguished within words.
- Most words in the African languages have two or more syllables.
- A vowel marks the end of a syllable (for instance the example in the second bullet above).
- The only consonant that may be syllabic in isiZulu is /m/.

Phonological awareness skills involving phonemes

Identifying separate sounds within words (phonemes) is a slightly more difficult skill to develop because it involves a more detailed and precise level of phonological analysis. Research has consistently found (e.g. Bus & van IJzendoorn 1999) that children who are good at detecting phonemes learn to decode words more easily, and this association seems to be present even after variability in reading skills due to intelligence, receptive vocabulary, memory skills and social class is partialled out.

In the sections below examples of exercises are given to show how teachers can develop phonological and phonemic awareness in learners, starting first with syllables followed by phonemes. These exercises can be done with Grade R and 1 learners. They can also be done with Grade 2 and 3 learners who still struggle with basic decoding.

These exercises should be done in a fun and playful way, for about 10 minutes only at a stretch. You can also vary the tempo and encourage participation by organising the class into groups and, for example, asking Group B to check whether Group A gives correct answers when you do the exercises with them. A 'quickie' exercise can also be done whenever you introduce a new word to the class, where after explaining the meaning of the new word, you can ask the learners to clap its syllables and identify the first and last sounds in the word.

Identifying syllables

An easy and fun way to help children develop syllable awareness is to get them to clap out the syllables in words. Start with their names, modelling to them first how to do so, with one or two examples.

Let's say some names aloud and clap the syllables. We'll start with Lerato – Le-ra-to (clap each syllable as you say it). How many claps? Three! That's right. Now let's do Siphokazi – Si-pho-ka-zi (clap each syllable as you say it). How many claps? Let's clap it again, slowly. Yes four, well done!

Sound comparisons and matching operations

There are various other exercises you can do to further develop syllable and phoneme awareness, for example, identifying the names of objects beginning with the same syllable or sound or identifying objects with different syllable or sounds.

The simplest matching operation is the **odd-one-out test**. In this test the learner has to identify the syllable or phoneme which is different from the others in a group. Consider the syllable examples below:

si si si sa
ba ba bo ba
pha phe pha pha
kha bha kha kha

Now say simple sets of syllables to learners one-by-one, where one syllable in the set is different from the others. Learners need to identify the odd-one-out by naming the syllable that is different. This can be a syllable that differs in terms of a vowel or a consonant. Let learners also name the particular sound within the syllable that is different.

izinto izinto izinti izinto	> izinti – the vowel /i/ is different
vutha futha futha futha	> vutha – the consonant /v/
isitsha izitsha isitsha isitsha	> izitsha – the consonant /z/
intamo intamo intamo intambo	> – the consonant cluster /mb/

The **minimal phonological contrasting pair** exercise can be used to develop general awareness of sound or syllable differences in words. This exercise entails comparing word pairs that are similar except for one syllable or phoneme or syllable, as shown in the examples below.

Do the stems vula and vusa start with the same or different syllable?
Do the stems thuma and thula start with the same or different syllable?
Do the stems -cima and -qina start with the same or different syllable?
Do the stems -dlala and -hlala start with the same or different syllable?
Do the stems -khala and -kala start with the same or different syllable?
Do the stems -khala and -khula start with the same or different syllable?

Similar exercises can be done to draw attention to same or different syllables **at the end** of words. This is a slightly more challenging exercise.

Do the stems -zama and -khothama end with the same or different syllable?

Do the stems -hlola and -vuka end with the same or different syllable?

Do the stems -khotha and khipha start with the same or different syllable?

Do the words umuzi and umusi start with the same or different syllable?

Once children are comfortable with identifying syllables, you can use the same exercises to draw their attention to **the sounds within syllables**, namely the phonemes, as illustrated below:

Do the stems -vula and -vusa start with the same or a different phoneme?

Do the stems -thuma and -thula start with the same or a different phoneme?

Do the stems -cima and -qina start with the same or a different phoneme?

Do the stems -dlala and -hlala start with the same or a different phoneme?

Do the stems -qala and -kala start with the same or a different phoneme?

Do the stems -khula and -khuza start with the same or a different phoneme?

Distinguishing between vowels and consonants

Quite early in the process of teaching phonological awareness the learners need to know which sounds are vowels and which are consonants.

This knowledge is essential for a proper understanding of the **syllable** structure as well as the basic principles of word building. Since there are a limited number of vowels in African languages (7 in Sesotho and 5 in isiZulu – English has at least 20!) it is easier to first quickly teach children the vowel sounds (within a week) and then point out that all other sounds are consonants. Alternatively, teachers can alternate the teaching of a vowel and a consonant sound until all the vowels have been taught. In this way children can start blending and segmenting shorter words from the start of phonics.

There are five basic vowels in isiZulu and they are represented by the letters /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/ and /u/: /a/ in *Amandla*; /e/ in *intethe* ; /i/ in *ipiki*; o/ in *ogogo*; /u/ in *ufudu*.

Segmenting words into syllables or phonemes

Segmenting entails the process of breaking down a word into its constituent segments, thus breaking down the word *ihlathi* into the syllables /i/, /hla/, /thi/ and then into the phonemes /i/, /hl/, /a/, / th/, /i/ or segmenting the word *siyadlala* into the syllables /si/, /ya/, /dla/, /la/ and then into the phonemes /s/, /i/, /y/, /a/, /dl/, /a/, /l/, /a/.

Segmenting and its reverse process of blending are both important phonological operations to be mastered. You can demonstrate segmentation visually by pulling your arms apart slowly when you say a word and say something like *OK, I'm going to say the word **amasi** slowly so that we can pull it apart to find the syllables in it: aaa – mmmaaa – sssiii*. Alternatively you can put out your left arm when you say the word and tap the syllables with your right arm as you say the word, e.g. tap your left arm at the shoulder on /a/, the middle of your arm on /ma/ and your wrist on /si/. You can do the same with phonemic segmentation. In this way the children get to visually understand the notion of chopping up (segmenting) a word into syllables or phonemes.

Give learners individual words to segment into syllables, where they say the word aloud and clap each syllable. Start with simple words comprising two or three syllables and then gradually increase the difficulty level.

uThandi	> /u/Tha/ndi/
nina	> /ni/na/
amasi	> /a/ma/si/
siyacabanga	> /si/ya/ca/ba/nga/
isithuthuthu	> /i/si/thu/thu/thu/
besisahlakula	> /be/si/sa/hla/ku/la/

Now give them practice in segmenting phonemes.

vika	/v/i/k/a/
mina	/m/i/n/a/
siqeda	/s/i/q/e/d/a/
isihlahla	/i/s/i/hl/a/hl/a/
ingcwadi	/i/n/gc/w/a/d/i
amehlo	/a/m/e/hl/o/

Blending syllables or phonemes into words

This is the joining together of syllables or phonemes to form words (including **nonsense words**). Individual phonological segments (syllables or phonemes) are put together or blended to form a word.

Ask learners to repeat the different syllables of a word slowly after you and then blend them to form a word by pronouncing the word using appropriate tone and length. Start with simple two syllable words and gradually introduce longer and more difficult words. (Initially avoid using nouns from classes 1 and 3 with the shortened prefix um- and monosyllabic verbs containing the object morphemes for classes 1 and 1a (-m-). In these cases the /m/ is syllabic and you want

them to first grasp the general pattern, namely that the end of a syllable is marked by a vowel.)

Below are some examples for syllable blending.

thi/ /na/	> thina
/la/ /pha/	> lapha
/zo/ /na/	> zona
/i/ /si/ /tsha/	> isitsha
/a/ /ba/ /fa/ /na/	> abafana
/si/ /ya/ the/ /nga/	> siyathenga
/ngi/ /ya/ /ja/ /bu/ /la/	> ngiyajabula

Once the learners are competent at blending the syllables to form words you can include examples containing the syllabic /m/. See the examples below.

/u/ /m/ /fu/ /la/	> umfula
/u/ /m/ /zi/ /mba/	> umzimba
/si/ /ya/ /m/ tha/ /nda/	> Siyamthanda (uNtombi)
/ba/ /ya/ /m/ /bo/ /na/	> Bayambona (umntwana)

Next let learners blend **individual phonemes** to form words. Say the phonemes to them, using your outstretched left arm and tapping the phonemes in sequence with your right hand, and then let them blend them into a word. Let learners then "build" the words using the phonemes they hear. For example:

/a/ /b/ /a/ /n/ /t/ /u/	>	abantu
/s/ /i/ /th/ /e/ /ng/ /a/	>	sithenga
/u/ /ph/ /o/ /n/ /d/ /o/	>	uphondo
/n/ /a/ /b/ /o/	>	nabo
/s/ /i/ /hl/ /a/ /l/ /a/	>	sihlala

Learners can generally blend phonological segments more easily than they can segment them.

Deletion of a syllable or phoneme

Deletion involves the removal of a sound or syllable from a word, for example if we delete the first syllable in *sithanda* it becomes *thanda*. Note that if the resulting word after deletion (or substitution) becomes a nonsense word, it does not matter as the focus is on playing around with sounds in a fun and creative way, not creating 'proper' words.

Say words to learners and then ask them to delete particular syllables, i.e., delete the 1st, 2nd, 3rd syllable, etc.

abantu	delete the 1st syllable
izinkomo	delete the 1st syllable
siyathenga	delete the 2nd syllable
ulunyawo	delete the 2nd syllable
isithombe	delete the last syllable
intombi	delete the 3rd syllable

Next give the learners practice in deleting a single phoneme in words. For example:

abantu	delete the 1st phoneme = bantu
isikhova	delete the 1st phoneme = sikhova
ziyakhala	delete the 1st phoneme = iyakhala
ufunda	delete the 1st phoneme = funda
izithombe ezihle	delete the last phoneme of the first word = izithomb' ezinhle

Substitution of one syllable or phoneme for another

Substitution involves the process of replacing one syllable or phoneme with another, for instance replacing the syllable /thi/ in *thina* with / mi/ to form the word *mina*, or replacing the phoneme /s/ in *sona* with the phoneme /z/ to form the word *zona*.

Supply learners with individual words and then tell them to substitute particular syllables with the syllables given to them. Let them substitute the 1st, 2nd, 3rd syllable, etc.

vika	replace the 2nd syllable with /mba/; /la/
thutha	replace the 1st syllable with /fu/; /bu/; /su/; /tha/; /the/
ithuba	replace the last syllable with /na/; /nga/
isibalo	replace the last syllable with /mbo/; /ya/
bona	replace the first syllable with /so/; /zo/; /lo/; /we/; /ye/; /mi/; /thi/; /ni/; /wo/; /yo/

Once they are comfortable exchanging one syllable with another, move on to phonemes. Say aloud selected words to the learners and ask them to replace a specific sound (phoneme) with another. Let them substitute the sounds/phonemes in different positions in the word. Consider the examples below.

vika	replace the 1st sound with /ph/; /f/; /s/; /b/; /j/;
thutha	replace the 1st sound with /f/; /b/; /v/;
siyathula	replace the sound /u/ with /e/;
liyagijima	replace the sound /l/ with /s/; /z/; /n/;
bona	replace the 1st sound with /s/; /z/; /l/; /w/;

Additional resources on Phonological Awareness

There are many articles and websites that you can consult to help you build up your knowledge of Phonological Awareness.

The ***National Framework for the Teaching of Reading in African Languages in the Foundation Phase*** refers to Phonological Awareness on pages 23 to 26 and many others.

Watch videos from the ***Funda Wande*** website (https://fundawande.org/ video-resources) on Phonological Awareness in Reading for Meaning Module 2: 42; Module 3: 42; Module 7: 214 and 216; Module 10: 236 and in the other module: 25. The videos are in isiXhosa but have English subtitles.

Assessing phonological awareness

Phonological awareness instruction has an impact on children's reading competence in the Foundation Phase. Teachers should practise phonological awareness orally before they start mapping the graphemes onto sounds.

Here is an example of a checklist for assessing progress in phonological awareness:

Table 3: Checklist for assessing phonological awareness

Criteria	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Achieved
Shows understanding that speech comprises words			
Can orally segment words into syllables and phonemes			
Can orally blend syllables and phonemes into words			
Can identify syllables and phonemes in different positions in words			

Conclusion to oral language proficiency

In these first three units we have considered the role of oral language proficiency in reading, in particular phonological proficiency, as reflected in phonological and phonemic awareness. In conclusion, it is vital for teachers in the Foundation Phase to acknowledge the importance of developing language proficiency in general and phonological awareness (and phonemic awareness in particular) as they are skills that support early reading and make it much easier for children to learn how alphabetic writing systems work. Children with poor oral language skills struggle with comprehension in general and with reading. When children lack phonological awareness, they struggle to identify sound units such as syllables and phonemes in words, thus making it difficult for them to decode. They also struggle to remember a sound-based representation system which must be stored in their working memory, enabling them to retrieve the pronunciation, word segmentation and meaning of the word. Children in the early grades (Grade R and the beginning of Grade 1) can be taught to focus on words, tone, intonation and pronunciation. They should also be taught to break down words into syllables and phonemes and to blend the syllables or phonemes orally to form words.

Self-assessment activities

These are 'quickie' assessment activities to check how well you have understood key concepts discussed in this unit and whether you are able to perceive the pedagogical implications of such concepts in the teaching of reading.

Note: The key to these self-assessment activities is given in the Appendix at the end of this module. If you score less than 6/8 (75%) for these questions you are advised to re-read the unit again to strengthen your content and pedagogic knowledge.

1. In each of the statements below provide **the appropriate missing word (or words)**. (5)

    a) Developmentally children tend to become aware of larger units of sound such as syllables before they become aware of the smallest sound unit within words, the _____ .

    b) If a teacher asks her learners to say a word aloud (e.g. *amehlo*) and then clap the sounds in the word (e.g. /a/m/e/hl/o/) she is developing _____ awareness.

    c) Research has found that _____ is the strongest predictor of learning to read in alphabetic writing systems.

    d) Consider the following activities for developing phonological and phonemic awareness and then complete the sentence below.

i) Blending syllables to form words

ii) Substituting a phoneme with another phoneme in a word

iii) Segmenting words into syllables

iv) Segmenting words into phonemes

Developmentally, children tend to find activities in option _____ the easiest, while activities in option _____ tend to be more challenging and should be introduced later, once learners can successfully do the other activities.

2. Indicate which one of the following statements is **false**. (1)

a) Teachers should start developing phonological awareness in learners early, in Grade R already.

b) Phonological awareness refers to the ability to identify and manipulate phonemes and syllables in spoken words.

c) Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to identify and manipulate phonemes and syllables in written language.

d) Phonological awareness includes awareness of rhyme or alliteration in oral language.

3. Indicate which of the following options is the correct one. (1)

The word *umfanyana* (isiZulu) / *kgetholla* (Sesotho) can be segmented into syllables as follows …

a) /u/m/fa/nya/na/ /kge/tho/l/la/

b) /um/fa/nya/na/ /kge/tho/lla/

c) /u/m/fa/n/ya/na/ /kgethol/la/

d) /um/fanya/na/ /kge/thol/la/.

4. Indicate which of the following options is the correct one. (1)

The word ingqwayi (isiZulu) / nnyantsha (Sesotho) can be segmented into phonemes

as follows …

a) /i/ngqw/a/y/i /nny/a/n/tsh/a/

b) /i/n/gq/w/a/y/i/ /n/ny/a/n/tsh/a/

c) /i/ngq/w/a/y/i/ /n/ny/a/ntsh/a/

d) /in/gqw/a/y/i/ /nny/a/n/tsh/a/.

Unit 4: Vocabulary and its role in the development of reading

Introduction

This section focuses on vocabulary and its relation to both oral language and reading. There is a strong relationship between oral language proficiency, vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, and reading comprehension. In this unit we discuss the importance of vocabulary development in a child's home language, the nature of vocabulary and the limitations of explicitly teaching vocabulary.

Children's vocabulary

The number of words commonly used in nearly all everyday oral speech (child or adult) is quite low – around 3,000 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 recognise and understand many more words than we actually use. This is called our passive or receptive vocabulary, which includes all the words we recognise when we hear or read them. Our active vocabulary (also referred to as productive or expressive vocabulary) refers to the words we actually use in speech (or writing).

It is important that teachers understand that children enter school knowing varying numbers of words. Research estimates are given of linguistically advantaged children entering into Grade 1 knowing two to four times more words than linguistically disadvantaged children. Some learners from poorer socio-economic backgrounds have smaller vocabularies when they start formal schooling than children who come from wealthier homes. This is not because there is anything wrong with them but because they have less exposure to books and language in print and also less exposure to stimulating oral language and more limited vocabulary usage. Children whose parents give books to their pre-school children and read story books to them will have larger vocabularies. This explains why it is important to promote a rich language experience in the early years (Dickinson & Tabors 2001). This rich experience includes the family, home, school and classroom environments (Glende 2013).

Foundation Phase teachers have a pivotal role to play in extending their learners' vocabulary and must ensure that special attention is given to the development of the learners' vocabulary, as this is crucial for their school and later careers. If learners hope to go to university or college after finishing school, they need extensive vocabularies. Research in English vocabulary development estimates that by the time they leave school learners should have a vocabulary of around 15,000-20,000 words (Nation 2006). During their schooling learners should be acquiring about 800 to 1000 new word root meanings a year. There are also words that are necessary to make

critical distinctions in the physical and social worlds in which learners live. Without this word knowledge, people will be severely disadvantaged in attaining their goals in an advanced modern society.

Building a larger vocabulary is done partly through 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 comes from incidental learning through exposure, either through oral interactions or through reading. Written language contains a much wider range of words than spoken language, which is why reading is such a powerful source of vocabulary learning. Learners need to read fluently to continue to grow their vocabulary year by year. The meanings of new words encountered in texts can often be inferred from the context, or the meanings can be found through using dictionaries and other resources.

What is vocabulary?

The term 'vocabulary' conjures images of wordlists, dictionaries, and texts of different forms filled with what we know as words. Vocabulary refers to the collection of words and knowledge of those words needed for their use in effective communication both in oral and written language. Without words to name and describe objects around us we certainly would not be able to communicate effectively about or understand our surroundings the way we do. Effective communication involves listening, speaking, reading and writing as core skills.

Two basic types of vocabulary are identified in the literature, which match the receptive/passive (listening and reading) and expressive/productive/active (speaking and writing) skills in language use (Learning Point Associates 2004:23).

Table 4: Types of vocabulary

Types of vocabulary	
Receptive/passive	**Expressive/productive/active**
Listening: the words that we hear and understand when others talk to us	**Speaking:** the words that we use when we talk to other people
Reading: the words that we can recognise and know (and can decode) when we see them in print format	**Writing:** the words that we use (encoded in written format) when we write, for personal or communal consumption

Even though there is a large overlap between the different kinds of vocabulary named above, our receptive vocabulary is larger than our productive vocabulary. We hear and read and understand more words than those we use when we speak and write.

What is a word?

The smallest language unit with independent meaning is the word. It is therefore important to focus on learning word meanings in order to be able to communicate effectively and to read for meaning.

Knowing a word involves knowledge of its form (i.e. what it sounds like or looks like in writing), its meaning, how to spell it, and how to use it in meaningful communication. It is furthermore important to know the contexts in which words can be used and their **denotations** (meanings) and **connotations** (associations). For example, the words *slim* and *thin* when used to refer to someone's physical appearance have a similar denotation (i.e. not fat) but *slim* has a positive connotation while *thin* has a negative connotation.

A word, written in the orthography used for a language, is recognisable in printed form by the spaces before and after it. However, the concept "word" differs in length and complexity in different orthographies: it may comprise a monomorphemic form (for example *cha* in isiZulu or *katse* in Sesotho) or a combination of morphemes written conjunctively as a single word (for example the isiZulu word *asisasebenzi* made up of the morphemes *a-si-sa-sebenz-i*, or written disjunctively as in the Sesotho word, *ha re sa sebetse* comprising the morphemes *ha-re-sa-sebets-e*.

Considering the examples above, it is clear that words in the African languages are mostly morphologically complex. The isiZulu and Sesotho examples above are typical examples of a single word that may constitute a sentence. This sentence consists of one orthographical unit with spaces on either side. Even though it is a single word, it comprises a number of morphemes occurring in a fixed sequence, namely the negative morpheme, subject morpheme, progressive morpheme, verbal root, and negative final verbal morpheme.

The morphological complexity of the word in African languages poses some challenges for learning to read in these languages. The combination of morphemes constitutes a rich (verbal) morphology. In languages such as isiZulu and Sesotho, knowing a word implies having knowledge of its root and its morphemes and the fixed positions these morphemes occupy in the word structure.

Vocabulary learning and its importance for learning to read

Vocabulary knowledge is essential for reading and writing. If a reader does not know at least 95% of the words in a text, she cannot read for meaning. Since the ultimate goal of reading is to understand the message in the text, a beginner reader must have an appropriate vocabulary for successful comprehension. Vocabulary has been identified as one of the 'Big Five' of reading.

All children are exposed to their home language from birth and words and sounds of language are first heard in the context of the home. Children enter the formal school setting with a 'working' vocabulary that they have heard from parents, caregivers and other individuals within their communities. They therefore have a basic oral (speaking) and aural (listening) proficiency.

Research has shown that children with earlier exposure to a varied and rich vocabulary have a much easier task learning to read and reading with comprehension compared to those without such vocabularies. One of the factors which contributes to some children having a much bigger vocabulary than others is the socio-economic and socio-cultural environment they emerge from when they start formal schooling. Another factor contributing to a larger and richer vocabulary among some children (and adults who may be from similar backgrounds) is the fact that being exposed to books and reading more and varied texts contributes to the acquisition of a larger vocabulary. However, poverty is not destiny. Schools that serve poor communities can help children overcome these challenges if the schools make learning to read a priority and provide classrooms rich in language and books.

The impact of early exposure to vocabulary and reading is described by Stanovich (1986:381) as the **Matthew effect**, a term that was coined from earlier research findings on the cumulative advantage children who had early reading experiences (exposure to print) have over those who did not. Children who read more also read better, have a wider vocabulary base, and are thus more encouraged and motivated to read more, learn more word meanings, and read better than those who do not have this exposure.

> The term **Matthew effect** comes from the Gospel of Matthew in the New Testament where it is stated that the rich shall get richer and the poor remain poor.

Snow (2016: 220) echoes the Matthew effect finding and the impact it has on learner reading achievements. Once learners complete Grade 3 (Foundation Phase in our context) and start Grade 4 (the beginning of the Intermediate Phase), a rapid transition should be made from learning to read to the lifelong skill of reading to learn. At this stage, children are expected to have completed the basic technical aspects of learning to read. They no longer learn to read, instead they read to learn. It is also generally at this stage that differences in ability to read become evident. The broader socioeconomic environment and the amount of exposure to rich language, books and print account for differences between learners entering the formal schooling system with differing abilities.

How is vocabulary acquired?

It is well known that most of a child's vocabulary is acquired incidentally (i.e. learning new words without any concerted effort). This may happen in the home, listening to parents, talking, watching a programme on television, and listening to the radio or reading. The more children are exposed to rich 'adult language' the better the chances of them gaining a richer and larger vocabulary.

If children are encouraged to use their oral language skills and to acquire the meanings of new words, their motivation and proficiency in both speaking and reading are enhanced.

There are differences of opinion amongst people of the same generation, inter-generationally and even between different cultures about the exposure of children to 'adult talk'. What is true though is that children are exposed to richer language usage when they are exposed to adult talk.

Oral discourse promotes vocabulary development in children, and social interaction is important for children's social development and their language development. On the other hand, it is also true that in homes where adults are illiterate or semi-literate, it may become challenging for a child to develop motivation for learning to read and to acquire the necessary vocabulary essential for mastering the required skills for reading.

Further factors impacting on vocabulary development in children include exposure to printed media and being read to consistently, from a variety of printed forms from a young age. Exposure to printed media means that children are exposed to reading activities involving the handling of books, following a story while being read to, interacting with the story and the text with an adult, enjoying the closeness with an adult during reading, and having an adult reading role model — all of these are important factors to motivate, and encourage a bigger vocabulary and oral proficiency in children before and during the time that they enter school.

The illustration below depicts this relationship: the more a child is exposed to reading activities, the bigger the resultant vocabulary, better comprehension of words and an increased capacity to acquire new vocabulary is achieved. All this is crucial in reading to learn.

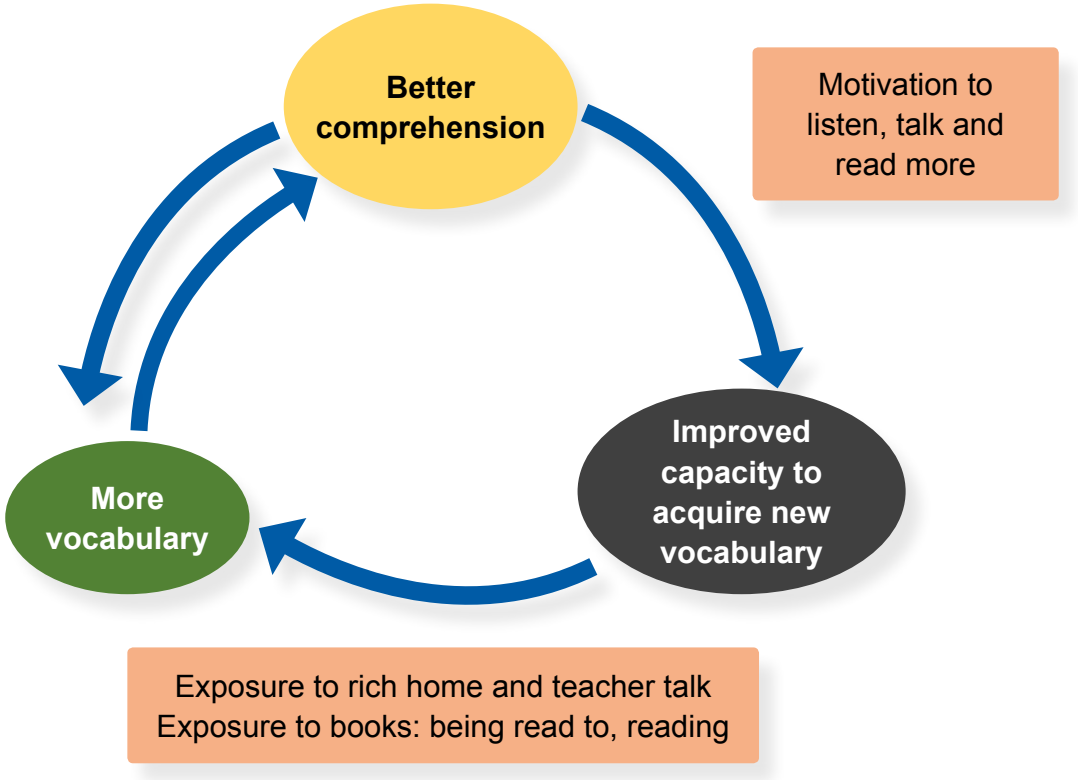


Figure 3: The reciprocal relationship between comprehension and vocabulary

Vocabulary is also acquired through explicit, deliberate learning, focus and goal-setting. For example, teaching learners new words daily assists in expanding their word knowledge. It is also necessary to sensitise learners to the fact that due to the agglutinating nature of African languages, there are large word families.

It is best to teach vocabulary in a theme-related manner. It is easier to learn new words if the words are all related to a theme such as wild animals, the beach, the jobs people do, etc.

Consider the vocabulary in the figures below that relate to different themes. Learning the vocabulary in this way is far more interesting than simply having word lists. The first example is about parts of the head and face.

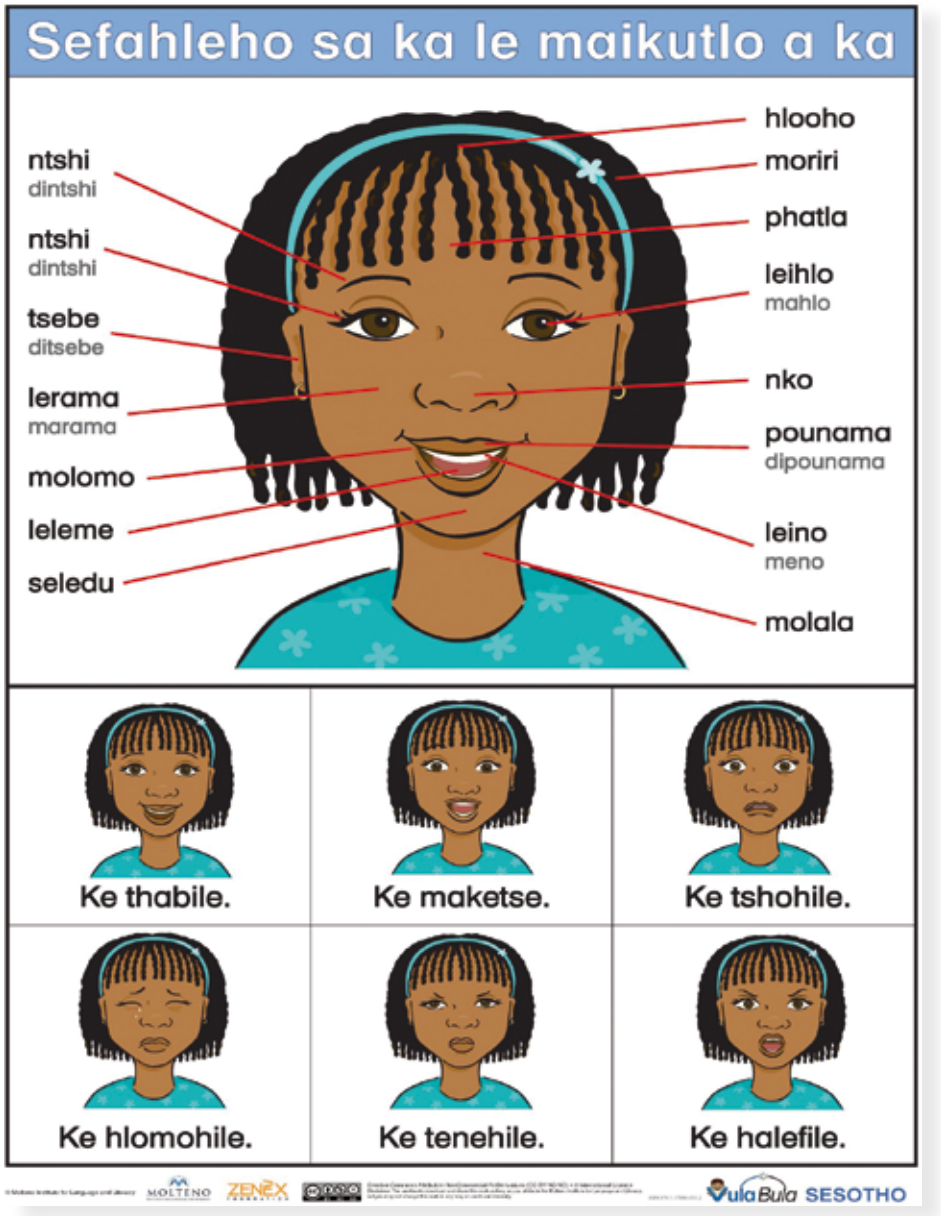


Figure 4: Words for the head and face

The next example is about different units of measurement. These word lists contain measurement words related to distance, time, mass and liquid content capacity. The terminology pertaining to a particular measurement, for instance distance or time, is listed with an illustration depicting the particular type of field. This helps to associate the measurement units with the particular category such as distance or mass.

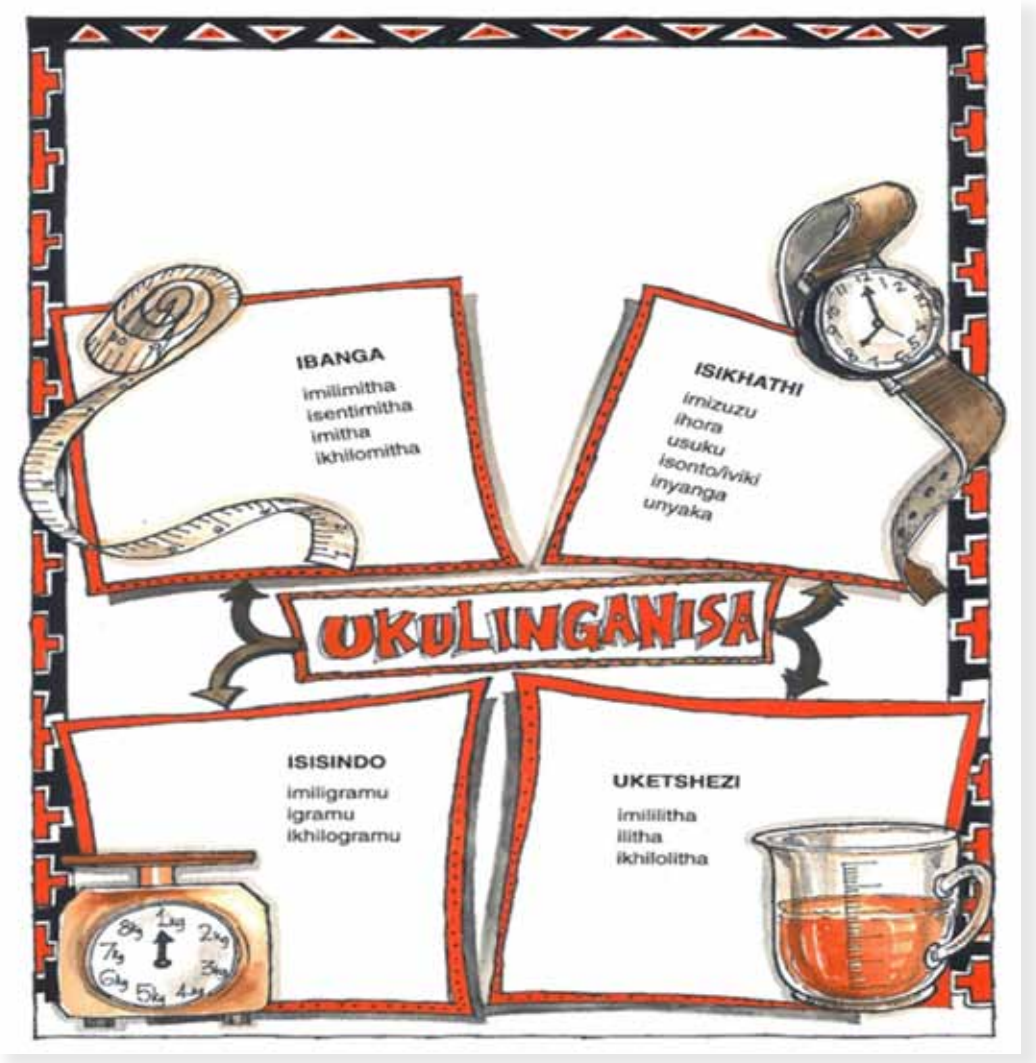


Figure 5: Units of measurement

Using children's rhymes or animal or bird sounds offers a unique way of learning new words and expressions. Consider the bird sounds and the mimicking of the chameleon in the pages below.

Figure 6: Rhymes and bird sounds

Figure 7: Words and animals

Even simple instructions of how a pedestrian should cross a road can be a source of vocabulary learning. In this case the language register (i.e. whether it is formal or informal) is instructional. Apart from exposure to essential vocabulary, learners are also taught basic road safety guided by a series of illustrations.

Figure 8: Crossing the road

Morphology and vocabulary learning

The meaning of a word can be modified by affixing morphemes to it. Consider the examples below:

uku-fund-a	'to learn/read'
uku-fund-is-a	'cause to learn/teach'
uku-fund-w-a	'to be learned' (passive)
uku-fund-isis-a	'to learn intensively'
uku-fund-ek-a	'to be learn-able'
uku-fund-el-a	'to learn/read for'

If the verb ukufunda 'to read/learn/study' with the stem -funda 'read/learn/ study' is known, new words with new meanings related to this basic verb can be distinguished and learned with less effort (in the case of agglutinating languages such as African languages).

Consider for example:

ukufunda	'to learn/learning'
ngifunda…	'I learn/read; I am learning'
asifundanga	'we did not learn/read'
umfundi	'learner'
isifundo	'lesson'
imfundo	'education'

The verbs and nouns above are all derived from the basic infinitive form *ukufunda* ('to learn/ read') by substituting or affixing different grammatical morphemes to it. The three nouns all belong to different noun classes, while the verbs also contain different grammatical morphemes.

Explicit learning creates an awareness of the word, word form and a conscious learning of meaning and context, which is different from the incidental learning of words. It may take more effort and multiple exposures to a written form of a word in order to learn it as opposed to incidentally learning it, but the learning can be deeper when learned formally.

The limitations of teaching vocabulary

Important as the intentional teaching of vocabulary is, it has its limitations. There is not enough time to teach the vocabulary that is required for successful schooling. Most vocabulary development takes place outside of explicit instruction. Indeed, 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.

Additional reading and resources on vocabulary development

There are many articles and websites that you can consult to help you build up your knowledge of ***vocabulary*** development.

The Primary Teacher Education Project study guide on Vocabulary provides detailed and useful information for the whole primary school and secondary school curriculum (https://www.jet.org.za/clearinghouse/projects/primted/ materials/language-and-literacy-materials-repository/ptrsg-six-vocabulary. pdf).

The Zenex Foundation course, ***The Expert Reading Teacher***, has a set of excellent materials on reading instruction, including modules on Vocabulary (https://www.zenexfoundation.org.za/the-expert-reading-teacher-reference- materials/early-grade-resources-for-the-classroom/).

The ***National Framework for the Teaching of Reading in African Languages in the Foundation Phase*** refers to Vocabulary on pages 39-42 and many others.

Watch videos from the ***Funda Wande*** website (https://fundawande.org/ video-resources) on Vocabulary in the Reading for Meaning Module 4: 117 to126 and 129 to 131 and 191. The videos are in isiXhosa but have English subtitles.

This reinforces again the vital importance of early fluency in reading. There is a clear reciprocal relationship between vocabulary and reading development. Words gained through reading can also enhance oral language proficiency. The more words a child knows the easier it is to read and comprehend. This in turn leads to building more vocabulary knowledge.

These points are well summarised in a ***Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement*** document (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 48-49):

> *"Learners also need a wide vocabulary, which is perhaps the single most important factor enabling a person to communicate well. A wide vocabulary is essential for all the language skills, but especially for reading and writing. The most effective way for learners to improve their grammar and increase their vocabulary is by reading intensively inside and outside of the classroom."*

Self-assessment activities

These are 'quickie' assessment activities to check how well you have understood key concepts discussed in this unit and whether you are able to perceive the pedagogical implications of such concepts in the teaching of reading.

Note: The key to these self-assessment activities is given in the Appendix at the end of this

module. If you score less than 6/8 (75%) for these questions you are advised to re-read the unit again to strengthen your content and pedagogic knowledge.

1. In each of the statements below provide **the appropriate missing word (or words)**. (5)

   a) If the word *pernicious* is a word that you read easily and understand but do not actually use in your everyday life, then it forms part of your _____ vocabulary.

   b) In order to understand a text a reader should understand at least _____% of the words in the text.

   c) Consider the following words: *eagle, bird, dove, ostrich*. The word _____ in this group of words is the superordinate word.

   d) The term _____ refers to whether the language used is formal or informal.

   e) In African languages, vocabulary knowledge includes knowing a word's _____ and its morphemes.

2. Indicate which one of the following statements is **false**. (1)

   a) Expressive vocabulary refers to the vocabulary that we know when we see it in a text.

   b) There are large discrepancies in the vocabulary knowledge of children who speak the same home language.

   c) Most of the words that children have learnt by the time they start school have been acquired incidentally.

   d) Research has found that the language used in children's storybooks is often richer than the conversations that adults have with one another.

3. Indicate which of the following statements is the correct one. (1)

   a) It is more difficult to learn new words that are thematically related as children tend to confuse them.

   b) The isiZulu form *asisasebenzi* /the Sesotho form *ha re sa sebetse* comprise several

morphemes occurring in a fixed sequence, e.g. subject morpheme, progressive morpheme, verbal root, and negative final verbal morpheme.

c) There is a reciprocal relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension, which means that the more words learners know the better they comprehend, and the more they read the better their chances of acquiring new words.

d) Giving learners new word lists to learn each week is more effective and time-saving than explicitly teaching children new words in a meaningful context.

4. Consider the following scenario and then indicate which one of the options **is irrelevant to or an inaccurate reflection** of this scenario. (1)

After his learners were exposed to and practised using time words and sequence in the 'How to make a cup of tea' lesson, Teacher Nhlanhla used the following Listening and Speaking lesson to further develop the learners' oral language proficiency. For example, he brought pictures of different items of crockery and cutlery to illustrate and discuss words relating to spoon, teaspoon, serving spoon, knife, fork, cup, mug, glass, plate, jug, bowl, dish, etc. He also had dialogues with the class about food they loved or disliked the most and why, and they practised appropriate ways of thanking someone for something nice to eat (Thank you, Mama, the chicken was delicious/scrumptious) or declining something politely (No thank you, Auntie Sophie, I've had enough pap now).

a) The approach to vocabulary development in this lesson is focussed on explicit vocabulary development, with few opportunities for incidental language learning.

b) Teaching the names of different kinds of cutlery and crockery enables the children to learn about similarities and differences between things that words label.

c) The teacher is using a theme-based approach to developing the learners' vocabulary in the Home Language.

d) The teacher promotes vocabulary acquisition in context and through meaningful interaction.

Unit 5: Aspects of building vocabulary

Introduction

Developing an awareness of words is key to developing vocabulary. This involves actively taking note of words as they appear in print, hearing the sounds in oral form, and recognising words in other forms of media like billboards and electronic media. Noticing and writing down new words assist in developing an understanding of their contexts, their form, their meaning and connotations. It is an important part of explicitly learning new vocabulary to have an awareness of words. It leads to reflecting on the new word and also learning its word family – thus its related forms and meanings.

Wanting to learn new words is important so increasing the motivation of the learners is vital. A highly skilled teacher who keeps learners motivated to explore, to know more, read more, do more and interact more with others is a true asset to a school. An interesting and stimulating classroom is one with displays, word walls, access to dictionaries, readers, flashcards and other resources to create a keen interest in reading and vocabulary.

During the allocated reading and literacy slots (totalling 7 to 8 hours per week) teachers can achieve much in terms of both explicit and incidental vocabulary learning in the classroom if they prepare properly for each lesson.

Teachers need to use rich language and increase their own vocabulary in isiZulu or Sesotho to impart this knowledge to children.

The importance of incidental vocabulary learning

Since the largest part of our vocabulary is learned incidentally, before formal schooling and beyond, vocabulary learning should not be limited to the classroom. It is vital to read widely, extensively and consistently. It is well-known that motivated readers have a larger vocabulary than those who do not read. Reading for leisure and pleasure increases opportunities for incidental word learning.

Strategies for explicit vocabulary learning

Several strategies are necessary to ensure that vocabulary learning becomes a habit and that the child is equipped to read with comprehension.

The South African Foundation Phase curriculum is highly structured in terms of Literacy, Numeracy and Life skills, and a range of recommended activities ensure that learners are exposed to listening and speaking, reading and writing.

Teachers in the Foundation Phase focus on developing the learners' language, basic literacy and basic numeracy skills. They have to navigate between the various activities to ensure that learners are maximally benefitting and developing their linguistic skills and that at the end of Foundation Phase they can read for meaning and for enjoyment.

Key strategies that enhance vocabulary development are:

- Frequent, regular, **exposure** of learners to new words in listening and talking and in reading texts so that they build the size of their vocabulary
- Explicit teaching on the **meaning** of words and families of similar words
- Teaching to develop an understanding of the **morphology** of words
- Building the ability to **infer meaning** from words
- Emphasis on the **comprehension** of texts – reading is essentially about gaining meaning from texts and all the words in them
- Developing **dictionary skills**
- Where necessary also speaking and teaching in the **language of the children** who are not home language speakers of the LOLT

Not all the strategies are used all the time, the context of the words will determine which strategy to adopt.

Increase vocabulary exposure

Vocabulary exposure refers to how often a new word is encountered and the likelihood of learning it so that it becomes part of the learner's receptive or productive word knowledge. Weaker learners are more dependent on highly frequent exposures than stronger ones (Zahar, Cobb & Spada 2001), in both oral and written modes.

Research suggests that between 6 to 16 encounters with a new word in the written mode are required for a new word to be taken up in the **lexicon** (Rott 1999; Zahar, Cobb & Spada 2001; Van Hees & Nation 2017).

Uptake in oral discourse is less clear and seems to require many more exposures. Brown, Waring and Donkaewbua (2008) found that at least 30 encounters with a new word were required for uptake in oral classroom discourse. This may have to do with the ephemeral nature of spoken language and the difficulty of associating form with meaning when hearing new words. The research suggests that it is more difficult for learners to learn new words from listening than it is from reading.

The rate of vocabulary growth and vocabulary use at age 3 are strong predictors for later school performance and reading comprehension at age 9 to 10 (Hart & Risley 2003; Farkas & Beron 2004).

Research suggests that it is difficult to change children's vocabulary trajectories established in

early childhood years unless an intervention occurs (Hart & Risley 1995, 2012; Collins 2005; Fernald, Marchman &Weisleder 2013).

Very little research has been done on vocabulary learning in South Africa. Wilsenach (2015) found that receptive vocabulary size in emergent bilingual Northern Sotho–English children predicted the development of their early literacy skills. Children with a limited vocabulary not only lag behind their peers at school entry, but the gap widened as they progressed through school. Pretorius and Stoffelsma (2017) found that a group of English First Additional Language learners in the Eastern Cape only knew 27% of the most frequent words in their textbooks by the end of Grade 3. This obviously poses serious challenges for reading with comprehension.

Rich and engaged classroom talk, asking questions and supplying explanations of word meanings and word use are all important ways of exposing children to new vocabulary. The use of a vocabulary wall, learner's personal vocabulary lists/books and vocabulary quiz competitions are all means to stimulate vocabulary learning. Children are able to learn more words per day than you might think. Vocabulary learning and assessment must become part of the home language learning programme.

Exposure to written language, e.g., by reading storybooks, is a powerful way of developing a rich vocabulary. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, reading exposes learners to words that they are unlikely to encounter in speech. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the uptake of new words is facilitated more readily in the written than the oral mode. Simply repeating the new word orally several times, as many teachers typically do, does not provide a rich and varied language context for acquiring the meaning of the word.

Increase vocabulary size

Vocabulary size (or breadth of vocabulary knowledge) refers to how many words a person is estimated to know (their personal lexicon), while **vocabulary depth** refers to how well the words are known.

Establishing how many words learners know and how well they know different meanings and connotations associated with a word is difficult as it depends on how words are defined and counted (single words, word families, multiword units).

A distinction is also made between receptive vocabulary (words we **know** when we listen or read) and productive vocabulary (words we actively use when we speak or write). Receptive vocabulary knowledge is always greater than productive vocabulary knowledge. As vocabulary size increases, receptive vocabulary can become productive vocabulary.

Corpus linguistic research and the large electronic language data banks developed in the process have provided strong empirical evidence of the frequency with which words are used and the contexts in which they typically occur. This has led to the identification of different word frequency levels, ranked according to 1 000 intervals, ranging from high-frequency words (the 1

000 to 3 000 most common words used in everyday conversational contexts and words that occur commonly across a variety of written texts), mid-frequency words (words that fall within the 4 000 to 9 000 most frequent words) and low-frequency words (words that occur in the 10 000 to 25,000 and beyond bands of frequency) (Schmitt & Schmitt 2014). Mid- and low-frequency words tend to occur more often in written than oral discourse.

Vocabulary acquisition is strongly affected by word frequency. High-frequency words tend to be acquired before mid- and low-frequency words. Vocabulary knowledge is also an indirect index of literacy practices – children who seldom read are unlikely to know words in the mid- and low-frequency word levels, since words at these levels occur predominantly in written language. This applies to both Home Language speakers and to intermediate and advanced learners of an Additional Language.

The ***Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)*** for Home Language does not specify the number of words learners are expected to know by the end of each year though numbers are given for First Additional Language (FAL) learners (Grade 1: 700 to 1 000; Grade 2: 1 000 to 2 000; Grade 3: 2 000 to 2 500) are expected to know around 1 500 to 2 500 high-frequency words (CAPS Foundation Phase, 2011a, b, c: English, p. 22, isiZulu, p. 24, Sesotho, p. 22), and a list of 300 high-frequency words is given in FAL English (2011f, pp. 87-89).

Research on vocabulary development in the English-speaking world suggests that children acquire about 3 000 words on average every year (Pretorius & Stoffelsma (2017:9).

Teachers in the Intermediate and Senior Phases must never assume that teaching vocabulary is something done only in the Foundation Phase. This is made clear in the ***Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement*** for Home languages which sets clear targets for vocabulary learning in the Intermediate Phase (Department of Basic Education 2011d:33):

Table 5: Targets for vocabulary in Intermediate Phase

	Term	1	2	3	4
Commonly used words in spoken language	**Grade 4**	1700-2500	1850-3000	2000-3500	3500-4000
	Grade 5	2400-4000	2700-4250	3000-4500	4500-5000
	Grade 6	3500-5000	3700-5250	4000-5500	5500-6000
Reading vocabulary (new words)	**Grade 4**	800-1900	900-2200	1000-2500	2500-3000
	Grade 5	1500-3000	1750-3300	2000-3500	3500-4000
	Grade 6	2200-3800	2400-4200	2700-4600	3000-5000

Although it is right to target the learning of an appropriate number of new words in each grade, it must be emphasised that mastery of vocabulary is a gradual, context dependent, lifetime process of growth. Word learning happens bit by bit and each repeated encounter with a word adds to the depth of understanding of its meaning. It takes time for learners to move from having no understanding of a word to having some passive hold over it to finally being able to situate it in

various contexts and use it accurately in spoken and written communication.

To develop a large vocabulary the teacher has to do five essential things (Texas Education Agency 2002):

- encourage wide reading
- expose students to high-quality oral language (through reading aloud and discussion)
- promote an interest and curiosity about words – developing 'word consciousness'
- provide explicit instruction of specific words
- teach and model independent word-learning strategies.

Based on ***CAPS*** expectations, see the table below on the relationship between exposure to word frequency levels and language and reading development across the grades.

Table 6: Age, grade, word frequency level and text transitions in the early school years

<table>
<tr><th>Phase</th><th colspan="2">Reception</th><th colspan="3">Foundation</th><th colspan="3">Intermediate</th></tr>
<tr><td>Age</td><td colspan="2">5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td></tr>
<tr><td>Grade</td><td colspan="2">R</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td></tr>
<tr><td>Word frequency levels</td><td colspan="3">high</td><td colspan="2">high mid</td><td colspan="3">high mid low</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="6">Texts</td><td colspan="3">short texts accompanied by visuals on every page</td><td colspan="5">longer texts and more information texts</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">mainly narrative, easy, simple language</td><td colspan="5">language more complex</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">vocabulary mainly in the high-frequency range</td><td colspan="5">increasingly more vocabulary in the mid- and low-frequency ranges</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">topics concrete, local, everyday knowledge</td><td colspan="2">topics more abstract</td><td colspan="3">topics more abstract, beyond local everyday knowledge</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">within learners' frame of reference</td><td colspan="2">some expansion of frame of reference</td><td colspan="3">frame of reference expands – topics beyond local everyday knowledge</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3"></td><td colspan="2">more silent reading</td><td colspan="3">silent, independent reading</td></tr>
</table>

Attend to knowledge about words and their meanings

Knowledge about words can relate to single words, phrases or multiword units (e.g. *amanzi, njengoba sazi, ilanga likhipha inhlanzi emanzini*), idiomatic or metaphoric expressions (e.g.

inyathi ibuzwa kwabaphambili, indlovu ayihlatshwa ngamkhonto munye), proverbs (e.g. *ubolibamba lingashoni, ingwe ikotha amabala ayo amhlophe namnyama*) and collocations (e.g., knowing that *imbiza* can be associated with words like *utshwala, isikhetho, ukhamba*, *umancishana)*.

Vocabulary knowledge includes knowledge about the meanings of words, their form (how they are pronounced or written), their grammatical functions (whether they are nouns, verbs, adverbs, pronouns, etc.), their connotations and social usage (other meanings associated with them and their use in formal or informal contexts), and their links to other languages.

Morphological awareness in vocabulary development

Morphemes are the minimal units in words associated with meaning. In the African languages, words may be monomorphemic such as the words kodwa ('but'), *kapa* ('or'), *uma* ('if') but these words are in the minority. The majority of words are morphologically complex, referred to as polymorphemic words.

An example of a morphologically complex word is *abakayitholi* ('they have not yet found/ received it (the book)'), comprising the grammatical morphemes a-, -ba-, -ka-, -yi-, and the final verb categorial morpheme -i and the verbal root -thol-. The grammatical morphemes are the negative morpheme (of the present tense) a-, subject morpheme ba-, the aspectual morpheme -ka- expressing the meaning of 'not yet', object morpheme -yi-, and categorial negative final morpheme (of the present tense) -i.

The morpheme which carries the lexical load is the root. A **word root** is that part of the word that carries the lexical meaning of the word. Words with related meanings form a **word family**. The derived words are usually formed from the base form of a word using various grammatical morphemes. There are also other words that have a common **etymological** origin to the base. The word base and the derivatives all have a similar core meaning. Knowing the meaning of one root word can help the learner understand the meaning of words in the word family that are related to that root word.

A distinction is made between orthographical (written convention) and linguistic words. The former is recognisable by spaces on either side, whereas the latter refers to linguistic considerations of the item. In our example above the word *abakayitholi* is both an orthographical and a linguistic word (see Module 1 for an explanation of orthographic and linguistic words). Furthermore, African languages follow two orthographic systems, namely the disjunctive system employed by the Sotho languages, where the tendency is to have more but shorter orthographic words such as the Sesotho example *Ke a ba bona* ('I see them') and the conjunctive system used by the Nguni languages, where the words tend to be fewer but longer, such as the isiZulu example *Ngiyababona* ('I see them').

It is important for the children reading in African languages to understand the morphological structure of words in these languages. This competency will assist them to identify the meaning

of words (without necessarily consulting a dictionary), recognise words belonging to the same word family, construct new words from known words, and gain a better understanding of the grammar of the target language, which is in turn crucial for learning to read.

If we consider the words *ulwazi, ukwazi, nginolwazi*, and *onolwazi*, we realise that the common root form in all these words is -azi ('know') and each of these words, namely the noun 'knowledge', the infinitive form 'to have knowledge' the non-verbal predicate 'I am with/have knowledge', and the qualificative 'knowledgeable', all convey this core meaning.

Morphological productivity is particularly prevalent in the noun and verb in African languages. The system of noun class prefixes is a prime example of a productive morphology. Not only do the noun classes generally distinguish between singular and plural forms, in some instances a noun can take the noun class prefix of different noun classes and in doing so modify the meaning of that noun – consider for instance the nouns *umuntu, abantu, isintu* and *ubuntu*. It is also well known that the noun class prefixes govern different types of agreement morphemes that are copied onto other words that are morpho-syntactically related to the noun. Consider in this regard for instance the subject and object morphemes that form part of the verb as in this example, "Umzali uyazibiza izingane." ('The parent is calling them, the children.') Also consider the agreement morphemes contained in the pronoun forms in for instance *izilwane zona*" (< zi+o+na), "zonke" (< zi+o+nke) and "lezi" (< la+izi). Agreement morphemes are also contained in the qualificatives (adjectives, relatives and relative verbs) as is evident in the examples *inyoni enkulu* ('the big bird'), *inyoni emanzi* ('the bird that is wet') and *inyoni endizayo* ('the bird that flies').

The meaning of a verb can be modified or extended by the use of particular morphemes. We can distinguish between two major types of morphemes in terms of the position they occupy in the verb, namely those that appear before the verb **root** (after the subject morpheme) and those that appear after the verb root, before the categorial verb ending.

The morphemes that appear before the verb root are:

- object morphemes, *Siyanifuna* ('We are looking for **you**'), *Bayalidlala ibhola* ('They are playing soccer')
- reflexive morpheme -zi- *Umntwana uyazigeza* ('The child washes herself')
- aspectual morphemes such as the -nga-, -sa- and -ka- *Singaya olwandle* ('We may go to the sea'), *Usabhala incwadi* ('He/she is still writing a book) and *Obaba abakafiki* ('Father and company have not yet arrived')
- the negative morpheme -nga- *Uma imvula ingani izilwane ziyahlupheka* ('If it does not rain the animals suffer')

The morphemes that appear in post-root position before the categorial verb final morpheme are the so-called verbal extensions, that is:

- the passive -w-, *Izingubo ziyagezwa* ('The clothes are being washed')

- the reciprocal -an- *OSipho bayathandana* ('Sipho and company like each other')
- the applied -el- *Ngibambela umama inkukhu* ('I am catching a fowl for mother')

The verb final morpheme can take on different forms to mark the tense and actuality of the verb as being positive or negative, *Umfana uyasebenza* ('The boy is working'), *Umfana akasebenzi* ('The boy is not working'), *Umfana usebenzile* ('The boy worked') and *Umfana akasebenzanga* ('The boy did not work').

Inferring meaning

Once the meaning of the word root is known, reading similar sound sequences leads to learning new words with that same root form. During reading time, it is important to use learners' prior knowledge of words as a pre-reading exercise. Exploring existing vocabulary and prior knowledge of words, focusing on vocabulary that occurs in the text, serves as a good indicator of learner knowledge and as preparation and motivation for the task of learning new words. The surrounding context can also provide clues that help us infer the meanings of new words.

Given the importance of a deeper knowledge of the structure of, for example, isiZulu, a combination of phonics, phonological and morphological awareness will encourage learners to be able to detect the meaning of words. Consider the example of how the meaning of the word *imisila* ('tails') can be inferred in the text below (Nyembezi 1994).

> *Umdali wazibuka izilwane wabona ukuthi azibukeki kahle. Wayesenza imisila eminingi. Wenza imisila emikhulu nemisila emincane. Wenza imisila emide nemisila emifushane. Wathi eseqedile wathi zonke zizolanda imisila yazo. (**Igoda**, Ibanga 1)*
>
> *('The creator looked at the animals and saw that they did not look so nice. He then made lots of tails. He made big tails and small tails. He made long tails and short tails. When he had finished, he said that all the animals must come and fetch their tails.')*

Reading texts with known and unknown words can develop learners' ability to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words. From prior knowledge learners would know that animals have tails. The inferences made here would be the differences in tails as expressed by the adjectives.

Vocabulary knowledge correlates strongly with oral language proficiency, and with reading proficiency, and is an important precondition for the development of early literacy skills and reading comprehension (Read 2004; Helman & Burns 2008; Wilsenach 2015). Vocabulary knowledge also correlates with general academic performance (Nagy and Townsend, 2012).

Given the strong association between vocabulary and reading comprehension, the poor PIRLS literacy results suggest that vocabulary may be one of the inhibiting factors in reading comprehension amongst South African Grade 4 learners. Which raises the question: 'What do we know about learners' vocabulary development, even before they reach Grade 4?' More research is needed in this area.

Dictionaries are useful tools and learners must learn to use dictionaries from an early age.

The use of a personal dictionary or word lists in a notebook or exercise book to write down words unknown to the learner enhances word awareness and vocabulary building. In this way a record is kept of newly acquired words which could be shared with others at home, in the community or school environment. A constant lookout for new words and concepts is important in developing and extending an individual's vocabulary.

Learners need to be able to check the meaning of words that are new to them or which may have multiple meanings, some of which are unknown to them. They need to become familiar with using dictionaries and other reference works to assist in this enrichment of vocabulary and to regularise their spelling of newly acquired words.

Further vocabulary development comes from independent reading and for this, children have to learn how to use the appropriate dictionary procedures on their own.

Teaching dictionary use

Dictionaries contain words that are arranged in alphabetic order. To look up words, one first has to know the sequence of letters in the alphabet. As this order has no meaning in itself, it simply has to be learned by rote and children should know all the letters and where they occur in the alphabet.

There are a number of dictionaries specially designed for primary school use. In the case of English dictionaries, particularly where learners are not mother-tongue English speakers, it is best to use a dictionary that has clear and easy explanations (that is, the words used to define and explain the meaning of other words come from a list of the most commonly used English words).

The ability to use a dictionary effectively depends on the following basic skills:

- Use alphabetical sequence to look up new words, starting with the first letter of the word. For example, if the new word to be looked up is *fiction*, go to the f part of the dictionary (i.e. where all words starting with f are listed).
- Use alphabetical sequence *within* the word to further locate the new word, working from the second to third letter and so on, for example, fic-.
- Use the guide words (in the top row of the left hand and right-hand pages) that indicate the first word on the left-hand page and the last word on the right-hand page) to help you locate the correct word.
- Recognise that many words have more than one meaning so read them all then select the meaning that makes most sense, given the contextual clues in the text where the word appears (the context in which a certain meaning is more appropriate is generally illustrated in dictionaries).

Depending on the particular dictionary, there may be abbreviations saying which part of speech the word is (noun, verb, etc.) and the separation of the word into syllables to aid pronunciation. Most dictionaries have guidelines on how to use them in the front pages.

Differences in how English and African languages alphabetise words

Because of the differences in language structure between English and African languages, words in the dictionaries may be alphabetised in different ways.

In English, words stand alone and the first letter of the word is used to place it in alphabetical order. In an English dictionary you know that the word "father" will be listed with words starting with "f".

In the case of African languages, the morphological structure plays a major role in the organisation of words in the dictionary. Usually, verbs are entered into the dictionary according to their stems (thus as "bamba", or "bala" with the verb final categorial morpheme -a) while nouns are entered according to their roots (thus as 'baba' for *ubaba*, nunu' for *inunu* – 'izinunu' and 'nwabu' for *u(lu) nwabu – izinwabu)*.

It is likely that African language dictionaries for young learners will increasingly move towards the whole word position (de Schryver, 2010).

Whatever the case, the learners need to be shown how the words are alphabetically ordered in the dictionary they use, and it is a good strategy to introduce dictionary skills to illustrate morphemes and their function. Learners can be prompted to identify the morphemes in words as indicated below.

Table 7: Words and their morphemes

Word	Noun class prefix	Pre-root verbal morphemes	Root	Post-root morphemes
umuntu	umu-		-ntu	
isimemo	isi-		-mem-	-o
imikhumbi	imi-		-khumbi	
izindlwana	izin-		-dlu	-ana
sizothenga		si-, -zo-	-theng-	-a
waphendula		wa-	-phendul-	-a
akasafixizi		a-, -ka-, -sa-	-fixiz-	-i

In order to use a dictionary, learners must therefore be able to identify the root of the noun or the stem of the verb they want to look up. Learners also learn about **word families**, for example the word *isimemo* (invitation) will have the letter (n) next to it, meaning it is a noun. Several of its different meanings are displayed, including that it is a derivative from the verb stem -mema.

Translations from home language to additional language

In the multilingual context within many classrooms, the teacher can at times **code-switch** from one language to another in order to make clearer the meaning of words. This approach is particularly beneficial since most children will change from the home language to English as the language of instruction at the beginning of Grade 4. Emerging research points to the beneficial nature of code switching. More knowledgeable speakers of other languages can also serve as a resource for learning new words in those languages.

There is increasing need for multilingual approaches to learning (Pretorius 2019; Mdlalo, Flack & Joubert 2019). This is relevant in South Africa with regional as well as national official languages, as well as the influence of urbanisation and exposure to economic opportunity and the accompanying class mobility of speakers of different languages. Several international as well as local studies point to the advantages of having a multilingual as well as culturally diverse approach to the teaching of literacy and language in the Foundation Phase in particular. However, multilingual learners will still need to become familiar with the standard forms of their home language in Foundation Phase since that is the language form used in isiZulu and Sesotho storybooks, workbooks and other printed material.

Vocabulary and comprehension

Vocabulary is a powerful predictor of reading comprehension. Children with limited vocabulary struggle with reading comprehension because they lack sufficient depth of word knowledge to process the meaning of more complex words or words in different morphosyntactic environments. They have less efficient lexical processing skills, are less likely to learn new words from incidental or embedded exposure to words and need repeated and explicit instruction to acquire deeper word knowledge (Coyne, Zipoli, Chard, Faggella-Luby, Ruby, Santoro & Baker 2009).

Research has shown that children at risk for literacy failure need not only code-based reading instruction but also interventions to improve language and vocabulary skills (Biemiller & Boote 2006; Coyne *et al.* 2009). According to Nation (2013) the most effective ways to maximise vocabulary learning are to ensure that children do large amounts of reading, use graded material at the appropriate developmental level, have repeated exposure to targeted vocabulary and also have explicit learning through linked activities such as reading with exercises and computer-based activities.

The ability to read a text, on one's own, with understanding becomes increasingly important for school success from Grade 4 onwards. The PIRLS literacy results in South Africa suggest that current classroom practices do not sufficiently equip learners with adequate literacy skills to support the kind of literacy required when learners move to higher grades. Schools that serve low socio-economic communities are particularly vulnerable.

The current failure in reading comprehension

Large-scale national studies in South Africa such as the National School Effectiveness Study (NSES) 2007-2009 for Grades 3 and 6 (Taylor and Taylor, 2013), and international studies such as PIRLS (Grades 4 and 5) and SACMEQ (Grade 6) provide rich data about who can read, by when, and how well. They all consistently show South African learners as having poor reading levels, in whatever language they are tested.

South Africa's participation in three cycles of a large-scale international literacy assessment, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2006, 2011, 2016, and 2021 shows consistently low reading comprehension levels of our Grade 4 learners, irrespective of the eleven official languages in which learners were tested. The most recent data indicate that 81% of Grade 4 learners in South Africa (that is, eight out of ten learners) cannot read for meaning or retrieve basic information from the text to answer simple questions (Spaull 2023).

The 2021 PIRLS literacy results show that only 19% of Grade 4 learners reach the lowest benchmarks for reading in their Home Language (i.e., understanding literal information in a text). The remaining 81% of readers cannot read for meaning at all. This evidence suggests that in South Africa we have a failure in getting learners to read at an appropriate grade level in Foundation Phase. The gap seems to widen as learners ascend the schooling ladder. According to Spaull (2013) and Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena and McLeod Palane (2017) learners from disadvantaged homes and who attend schools in disadvantaged communities consistently underperform on numeracy and reading literacy assessments.

In South Africa, about 75% of learners do their schooling in an African Home Language in Foundation Phase. English as a First Additional Language (FAL) is introduced as a subject in Grade 1 and then becomes the language of instruction in Grade 4. For these learners this sudden shift from Home Language to English FAL is doubly challenging, as they do not have the language proficiency advantage in English that home language speakers have, plus they do not have grade appropriate reading skills in their Home Language to support a gearshift change in reading in another, very different, language.

The evidence available suggests that many learners in Foundation Phase struggle with their vocabulary development. In her study amongst Grade 1 bilingual Northern Sotho-English children, Wilsenach (2015) reported that the receptive vocabulary knowledge in both Home Language and English FAL was low. The findings suggest that receptive vocabulary not only predicts early literacy skills but can also identify children at risk of not acquiring basic literacy skills. The author emphasises the importance of developing both home language and English FAL vocabulary of bilingual learners.

Practical vocabulary development and factors within the classroom

Dickinson, Griffith, Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek (2012: 4-5) specify six principles that contribute to language learning through book reading. These principles are summarised in Table 9 below:

Table 8: Principles for language learning through

Principle 1: Children need to hear many words often
Hearing/seeing words during reading helps to incidentally develop vocabulary. Books tend to have a wider range of words and more low-frequency words than spoken language.
Principle 2: Children learn words when they are interested
Children's books are often colourful, contain exciting illustrations and objects/characters that are appealing to children. Books are held stationary which invites young children to be attentive.
Principle 3: Children learn best when adults are responsive to them
This links to the previous principle, namely when children are attentive/ interested they ask questions. Shared reading experiences with an adult can lead to discussion. These discussions can help to clarify, reflect on or share emotions. It all depends on the attitude of the adult towards answering questions and engaging the learner.
Principle 4: Words are learnt when meanings are made clear
Young readers get to hear words in context; sometimes the same words are used in various sentence structures which can support meaning making experiences. Further, children can engage in conversation to ask for word meanings and also attach meaning to visual cues (pictures) in the text.
Principle 5: Vocabulary and grammar are learnt together
Semantics and syntax form part of language learning and although these rules have to be explicitly taught, incidental exposure to correct grammar will help learners to develop a natural "feel" for what sounds right – if modelled correctly.
Principle 6: Keep it positive
Seeing/hearing a positive reading model in their teacher will encourage learners to be positive about reading as well.

Here is some additional information relating to the practice of these principles:

Vocabulary development in the vocabulary rich classroom (Principle 1 and 2)

Learners must be exposed to a rich variety of words for word learning to happen (Lane & Allen 2010). Teachers serve as role models of rich language use, exposing learners to words beyond the everyday here-and-now. In multilingual classrooms where a variety of languages and dialects are used, good teachers treat standard forms of the Home Language or English FAL (EFAL) as an addition, not a replacement to what the learners already speak. Both Home Language and EFAL learners can have strong vocabulary growth spurts if conditions are conducive to learning. A print-rich classroom supports vocabulary development because it enhances opportunities for interesting and meaningful word encounters (Cunningham 2005). Learners need easy access to fiction and nonfiction books, word walls, flash cards, posters, engagement in reading and having discussions about the books that are read.

Active engagement in language (Principle 3)

Children need to be actively engaged with words inside the classroom to improve vocabulary growth. Schmitt (2008: 339-340) argues that "promoting engagement is the most fundamental task for teachers and materials writers, and indeed, learners themselves."

A particularly effective instructional approach that supports active engagement with text in the classroom is having discussions about text with peers and teachers while also teaching strategies like summarising, predicting and clarifying. Chinn, Anderson and Waggoner (2001) present evidence that discussions about text in fourth grade reading lessons create a more extensive use of higher-level cognitive processes and intellectual productive academic discourse than if traditional teacher-led recitations were used. Discussion of texts involves meaning negotiation and assists learners in their productive word knowledge. For example, a question from the teacher such as *What do you think the author is telling us here?* can get the learners to express their views and come to realise that there may be different ways to find meaning in a story. In their **meta-analysis** Soter et al. (2008) report that classroom discussions can be considered productive when learners have the opportunity to talk for extended periods of time, when learners are invited to discuss texts through open-ended or authentic questions, and when the teacher engages in follow-up questions on the learners' responses. For example, a teacher may respond to a learner by saying *That's interesting, Siphokazi. What makes you think so? Are there any clues in the text – words, sentences, events – that lead you to that conclusion?* They also argue that, when authentic questions are used, learners are automatically invited to talk more, which provides them with opportunities to elaborate on a topic and use their reasoning and higher-order thinking skills.

Word awareness (Principle 4 and 5)

Explicitly drawing learners' attention to words, stimulating curiosity in words and their meanings, and helping learners recognise the morphological basis of words and their semantic relations

(synonyms, antonyms, connotations, etc) helps to foster word growth in learners. For example, the teacher can start the day with a 10-minute slot called *Magic words* (because knowing more words make us powerful!). The teacher takes turns asking 2-3 learners every morning what new words they heard/learned in the previous days. Each learner must write the word on the board, say the word aloud, explain what it means and explain where they heard/saw the word (e.g. while watching TV, while listening to a conversation when two aunts came to visit, when reading a book at home). Sharing words in this way motivates children to take an interest in words and encourages even shy children to participate.

Positive teacher expectations (Principle 6)

Teachers who deliberately create word rich classrooms and who have high vocabulary expectations of their learners serve as important change agents in their learners' vocabulary and reading trajectories. Teacher expectations must, of course, be realistic and related to what children in particular grade levels should be able to do.

Children in Grade 3 are in the final year of Foundation Phase and are typically around 8 to 9 years of age. By the end of Foundation Phase, they are expected to read simple texts fluently, with meaning and enjoyment, be familiar with different genres of text, especially narrative and information texts, and they should be able to read and understand – on their own – texts that are around 400 to 600 words long. By Grade 3 learners should be able to read independently and silently. Learners should be able to discuss and respond to questions on a text that reflect not only an understanding of explicitly stated literal information but also information that is implied (inferential questions) and be able to integrate and evaluate information within a text. They should also be able to write texts with three or more paragraphs.

Learners in the Intermediate Phase are expected to read accurately, fast (according to their grade level), with meaning and enjoyment. By Grade 4, learners increasingly read non-fiction such as academic or information texts, relying on their textbooks for learning new information about their world through their content subjects, while fiction and literary texts (narratives, poetry, drama) tend to be read only in their home language and additional language lessons. **In CAPS Intermediate Phase**, two types of words are identified: common spoken words and new words in reading vocabulary. By the end of Grade 4 English Home Language FAL learners are expected to know 2,000-3,500 common spoken words and 1,000-2,500 new 'reading' words (CAPS Intermediate Phase Home Language, 2011d, p. 33; English FAL, 2011f, p. 30).

While the practices, routines, expectations and literacy transitions from Foundation to Intermediate Phase are on the whole fairly tangible, vocabulary development within this time span remains a more nebulous area.

In practice, there is less certainty about what vocabulary is, the nature of vocabulary development and how it should be actively nourished, taught, measured or monitored in the schooling context. Very few teachers are aware of what vocabulary development entails, of the frequency levels of

words, and the importance of increasingly exposing children to less familiar words that do not occur in the everyday context to facilitate reading, comprehension and learning.

The majority of Foundation Phase classrooms are poorly resourced in terms of information and storybooks for children, and only a minority of primary schools have school libraries, not all of which are even stocked. Teachers thus need to be creative and think 'out of the box' to find ways to make their classrooms rich and exciting spaces in which to promote language and reading.

Vocabulary assessment

Vocabulary knowledge is seldom formally assessed, probably due to the fact that there are no easily accessible or free standardised vocabulary tests for schools to use and there are also no norms for vocabulary development in African languages. And besides English word frequency lists (of which very few teachers are aware), there are currently no readily available word frequency lists for Afrikaans and the African languages. Moreover, while word frequency lists are available for English, such lists are not yet readily available for African languages. However, that should not deter the teacher from assessing vocabulary.

A teacher can set aside 10 minutes every Friday to have a short vocabulary test (e.g. based on 10 new words taught during the week) or a vocabulary quiz to motivate learners to pay particular attention to vocabulary learning.

Below is an example of a word puzzle. It can be quite fun for the learners to find the words hidden in the picture below. Note that the words cover a particular theme, in this case the words denote clothing and accessories. There are at least 8 different words hidden in the bedcover!

Figure 9: Word puzzle

Conclusion to vocabulary development

Vocabulary, like linguistic knowledge, is sadly a neglected aspect of classroom teaching, even though it has a profound influence on the child's mastery of reading. If a child does not understand the meaning of at least 96% of the words in a text s/he will not be able to read with comprehension. Every person has receptive and productive vocabulary. Both the breadth (size) and depth of vocabulary knowledge are important. Children must know the meaning of many words and know how those words are used in different contexts. Research shows that learners who do not have a grade-appropriate vocabulary at Foundation Phase are unlikely to improve their vocabulary building without active intervention by a teacher. While children should be taught vocabulary systematically and overtly, most vocabulary is learned incidentally, especially when reading. A child tends to remember a new word when encountering it between 6 and 16 times in a story. In contrast, oral exposure to a new word requires many more repetitions (up to 30) for it to be acquired. It is therefore essential (for the purpose of learning vocabulary as well)

to instil a love for reading in the children. Children who struggle with reading or who have a negative attitude to reading will read less, which means they have far fewer opportunities to learn new words. Vocabulary learning is a life-long process. The more we read, the more our vocabulary knowledge improves, which in turn makes it easier for us to read and motivates us to read even more.

Self-assessment activities

These are 'quickie' assessment activities to check how well you have understood key concepts discussed in this unit and whether you are able to perceive the pedagogical implications of such concepts in the teaching of reading.

Note: The key to these self-assessment activities is given in the Appendix at the end of this module. If you score less than 6/8 (75%) for these questions you are advised to re-read the unit again to strengthen your content and pedagogic knowledge.

1. In each of the statements below provide **the appropriate missing word (or words)**. (5)

   a) An important part of explicitly learning new vocabulary involves actively taking notice of new words that appear in speech or writing, referred to as word _____. (awareness/consciousness)

   b) _____ (e.g. *inyathi ibuzwa kwabaphambili)* are also an important part of vocabulary learning.

   c) Short texts accompanied by visuals on every page are typical of texts read by learners in Grade _____ to Grade _____.

   d) Storybooks and information books comprising mid frequency words occur increasingly from Grade _____ onwards.

2. Indicate which one of the following statements is **false**. (1)

   a) That part of the word that carries the lexical load and is the simplest form of a word is called the root.

   b) It is important for learners to understand the morphological structure of words in African languages as this will help them to recognise words belonging to the same word family, which in turn can help them work out the meaning of new but related words.

c) Children with limited vocabulary struggle with reading comprehension, and because they have fewer efficient lexical processing skills, they are less likely to learn new words encountered in text.

d) Because African languages are morphologically complex, learners with less morphological awareness will understand texts as easily as learners with greater morphological awareness.

3. Indicate which of the following statements is the correct one. (1)

a) Spoken language is ephemeral so many more exposures to a new word are needed for acquisition of new words in oral discourse than written language.

b) Our productive vocabulary is always larger than our receptive vocabulary because productive words are the words that we use on an everyday basis.

c) Words that occur in the range of 1,000 - 3,000 words used most commonly in a language make up the mid-frequency level of words.

d) Children who read very little in their Home Language will still acquire low-frequency words from everyday conversations.

4. Consider the following scenario and then indicate which one of the options **is irrelevant to or an inaccurate reflection** of this scenario. (1)

Teacher Thandi enthusiastically starts her Grade 2 class each Monday morning by saying: "Good morning, my children. I can't wait to share my new word with you this morning! It is ..... (she says the word and writes it on the board at the same time). Let's all say this word aloud. (Learners say the word aloud together). Has anyone ever heard of this word? No, I expect not as it is a rather big word in isiZulu/Sesotho. It means …….(she explains the meaning, identifies its root, and uses the word in a sentence to show how it is used). I came across the word while I was reading a book in isiZulu/Sesotho called ------". She holds up the book to show them. (She often changes the context in which she encountered the new word that she shares with her learners.) "Now children, I'll stick a star on the forehead of the first learner who uses this word correctly in a sentence today." She holds up a stick-on star. "But you must use this word correctly, ne!" she smiles. "I wonder who will be our vocabulary star this morning!"

a) By sharing her enthusiasm for isiZulu/Sesotho words, the teacher is nurturing the learners' interest in word learning in their home language.

b) By mentioning the context in which she heard the new word, the teacher is helping raise learners' word awareness.

c) Although the teacher taps into several sound principles of word learning in her Monday morning class, she omitted to draw attention to the morphology of the word.

d) When Teacher Thandi says *"I wonder who will be our vocabulary star this morning!"* she is showing learners in a playful way how words can be used in both literal and metaphoric ways.

Unit 6: Motivation to read

Introduction

Research concerning the development of reading in the early years has primarily been focused on the development of cognitive skills to support and improve children's reading rather than a focus on enhancing motivation to read. However, researchers are increasingly recognising that children's motivation to read is important for their reading development (McGeown 2013). In this section, we will look at reading motivation and examine what reading motivation is, its importance, how it features in the teaching of reading and how it can be assessed. In this unit we discuss the notion of motivation and its importance in reading and we examine the different aspects involved in motivation in reading.

Think about your own experiences as a young reader

1. What was it like for you when you thought about reading?
2. What emotions did you have?
3. Why do you think you had these emotions?
4. Did you look forward to reading or not?

Being able to read is important, not only for academic success but also as a general life skill that is necessary in a literate society (McGeown 2013). Thus, identifying ways to improve children's reading through engagement in reading activities is important for ensuring sustained reading (Gambrell 2011).

What is reading motivation?

Motivation is the drive within us that gives us the energy to do something or change something, either in ourselves or in the environment. Motivation is what gives us the energy to behave in a goal- directed way. The essence of motivation is energised and persistent goal-directed behaviour. When we are motivated, we move and act.

Reading motivation can be defined as the likelihood of engaging in reading, of being willing to engage in reading, choosing to read and persisting in reading (Guthrie, Coddington & Wigfield 2009). Cambria and Guthrie (2010) describe reading motivation as the 'will' for reading and the cognitive aspects of reading as the 'skill' of reading.

Wanting to know how to read is important in learning how to read. Children need to be taught the skill of reading (i.e. they need to have good decoding skills in order to read) but they should

be taught in ways that promote and develop a culture of reading (Gambrell 1996; Baker & Wigfield 2000). Motivation is of particular importance because it affects the amount and breadth of learners' reading, which, in turn, helps the development of reading competence (Mol & Bus 2011; Wigfield & Guthrie 1997).

When we talk about "motivation" we are talking about an idea or concept in our mind that explains, or makes sense of, somebody's behaviour. We call such an idea or set of ideas a construct because we have constructed it in our minds to make sense of something that may be more complicated in reality. So if we talk about reading motivation as a construct, we mean that the teacher has a set of ideas about what makes children engage or not engage in reading. This construct will accordingly inform the teacher's pedagogy. Some elements of the construct will be drawn from the teacher's own individual experiences and from what other teachers tell her, some will be drawn from various theories about learning and teaching (of which there are many, such as linguistic theories, realistic theories, social constructivist theories, direct instruction theories – some competing with and contradicting each other).

There are many factors that contribute to motivation. It is useful for teachers to understand the multi-dimensional nature of children's motivation to read and provide support as necessary.

Presented in Figure 10 are key elements of our construct. It is important for teachers to consider these elements when teaching reading, focusing on developing children's reading motivation.

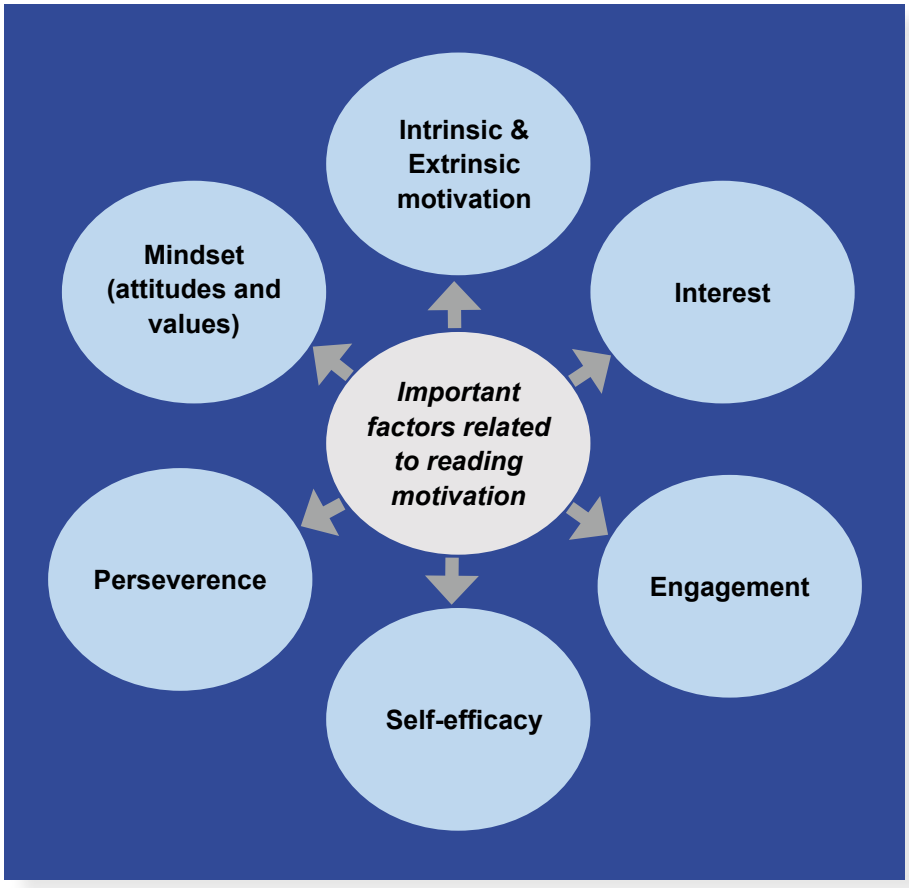


Figure 10: Key factors in motivation

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

The motivation to read may be intrinsic, that is, inside of us. This happens when, for instance, children choose to read because they find reading interesting or enjoyable. It is an internal reason (Wang & Guthrie 2004).

The motivation to read can also be extrinsic, that is, outside of us. This happens when a child reads a little story given as homework by the teacher, or to get better marks or to gain recognition or praise from their parents or teachers. These are external motivators, hence they are regarded as forms of extrinsic motivation.

The following table (Nickerson 2023) describes the elements of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation:

Table 9: Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

Intrinsic Motivation	Extrinsic Motivation
Purpose of participation: Enjoyment in the process itself	Purpose of participation: Benefits derived from participating
Emotions experienced: Pleasant (enjoyment, freedom, relaxation)	Emotions experienced: Tension and pressure (social approval is not under direct control)
Rewards: Effective rewards (enjoyment, pleasure)	Rewards: Social or material rewards
More likely to stay with a task long-term	More likely to do a necessary task of little interest
Self-motivation to take on new tasks and innovate	Increases social learning compliance
Self-motivation to take on new tasks	Increases speed of task
Slower behavioural change	Removing reward results in motivation loss

Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation includes the following factors: curiosity, aesthetic involvement, challenge and self-efficacy. Wang and Guthrie (2004) list them thus:

- Curiosity – a child's desire to learn more or new things through reading
- **Aesthetic** involvement – when a child finds a story appealing then he or she becomes more engaged or involved when reading
- Preference for challenge – a child's desire to master more complex reading material
- Self-efficacy – a child's belief that they can manage a task and be successful when carrying out a particular task.

These factors will increase as learners become more active readers. Learners who are less active readers are more likely to diminish the strength of their intrinsic motivations for reading (Schiefele, Schaffner, Möller, Wigfield, Nolen & Baker 2012).

Poor readers need support developing intrinsic reading motivation.

Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic reading motivators (praise and encouragement, improved grades, competitions) are also important. They can encourage previously disinterested children to apply themselves to reading (for example some boys may think that reading is not 'a cool thing' for boys) and may give high ability readers a competitive edge.

Wang and Guthrie (2004) provide these descriptions of extrinsic motivation factors.

- Competition – a child's desire to outperform others in reading
- Recognition – a child's desire for praise and for their reading achievements to be recognised by others
- Grades – a child's desire to achieve good marks in reading
- Compliance – a child's conformity to an external requirement to read
- Social engagement – a child's engagement in social interactions involving books and/or reading.

Interest in books and reading

Interest during reading is a key element of sustaining learners' engagement with reading. If much of what learners read does not engage them, they are less likely to continue to read. Gambrell (2011) provides examples of how this can be achieved during the teaching of reading. One of the ways to make reading an interest is to make it a habit, where learners engage with it daily and it becomes a sustained classroom activity (Donal 2015).

Reading is a process shaped partly by the text, partly by the reader's background and partly by the context in which the reading occurs (Hunt, 2004). Through their own enthusiasm for reading teachers can link the text content to the learners' own lives and show learners how books can help us travel the world and draw us into life experiences.

When engaging with the text, the readers' understanding is influenced by the text structure, prior knowledge, their experience with reading and their interest in the text they are reading (Donal 2015).

Self-efficacy

Boakye (2015) states:

> *Self-efficacy, which is the belief about one's ability to perform a task successfully, has been widely acknowledged as important in learning. This affective factor, though not explicitly evident, has been said to play an important role in academic performance. However, its role in reading development has not been widely investigated.*

She quotes Bandura (1997: 3) as defining self-efficacy as the "beliefs in one's capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments." For example, if you believe that you are not good at mathematics than you may have low maths self-efficacy and lack confidence in your ability to solve maths problems. The level of self-efficacy will influence the starting and finishing of tasks. Learners with high self-efficacy will exert more effort and time to complete tasks. Self-efficacy is linked to motivation, use of effective strategies, and learner autonomy. Self-efficacy impacts on reading achievement and academic performance.

Self-efficacy has been perceived to emanate from several sources: **mastery** experiences, **vicarious** experiences, social persuasion and emotional arousal (Boakye 2015). Repeated successes build mastery, failures lower hopes of gaining mastery. Boakye quotes Bandura (1997: 3) explaining that "it is easier to sustain a sense of efficacy, especially when struggling with difficulties, if significant others express faith in one's capabilities than if they convey doubts. One form of emotional arousal is anxiety which can seriously affect learning."

Many studies show a clear link between self-efficacy and academic achievement, though most of these studies have been done in high school grades or tertiary level. Although research on self-efficacy in reading is limited, a few studies have shown correlations between self-efficacy and reading achievement.

Engagement

Engaging in reading draws on the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of reading motivation. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between motivation and engagement (Unrau & Quirk 2014) because engagement is a sign of high motivation and engagement in reading increases the motivation to read.

Engagement means a positive increase in the amount of time spent reading. Cambrell (2011: 172-173) argues that:

> *engaged readers are intrinsically motivated to read for a variety of personal goals, strategic in their reading behaviours, knowledgeable in their construction of new understandings from text, and socially interactive about the reading of text. Therefore, promoting intrinsic motivation to read should be given a high priority in the reading curriculum.*

Perseverance

Perseverance is the continued effort to do something, despite facing difficulties while doing the task. Reading requires children to develop resilience and to continue to engage in reading even if

they struggle with reading. Without perseverance, the likelihood that a learner will make progress is very low (or next to nothing). Perseverance does not guarantee success, but non-perseverance is a guarantee for non-success (Silvervarg, Haake & Gulz 2018).

Mindset (attitudes and values)

The process of engaging with reading is underpinned by our own values and experiences with reading, including our pre-school reading experiences. Every time a person reads, there is a kind of transaction between the reader, the text, and the context (Long & Szabo 2016). Are the results of such transactions rewarding? If they are, our **mindset** will become a positive one towards reading. Mindset influences whether a learner will be an engaged reader or a disengaged reader (Tracey & Morrow 2006).

Children's experience with reading will shape their attitude towards reading. If they struggle to read and if their decoding skills have not been well developed in earlier grades, then reading will be effortful and frustrating and they may dislike reading.

In the literature, much of the work relevant to readers' motivation has been framed in terms of children's attitudes toward reading. The notion of reading motivation framed by attitudes towards reading has been the foundation of understanding motivation as a factor in reading development.

A child's deep-rooted feelings towards reading are also important. If a child has experienced negative attitudes towards reading, then she or he is more likely not to be intrinsically motivated to read. As a teacher, you will need to apply extrinsic strategies that will develop the child's extrinsic motivation because you cannot leave the child in a state of not wanting to read. On the other hand, children who have had positive experiences with reading are more likely to be intrinsically motivated towards reading. These are the kinds of readers who want to read because of the personal or academic value of reading (Cambria & Guthrie 2010).

Why is reading motivation important?

It is clear that reading motivation is interrelated with how much time a child reads (Morrow 1992), and whether they have the will to succeed (Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala & Cox 1999). Learners who are engaged readers are intrinsically motivated to read and think about their reading and monitor their understanding while they are reading. Children who read more, tend to be better readers perform better on standardised testing and develop into lifelong readers (Wang & Guthrie 2004).

Cambria and Guthrie (2010:16) contend the following:

> *You can certainly ignore motivation if you choose. However, if you do, you may be neglecting the most important aspect of shaping children's attitude towards reading.*

In their view to ignore reading motivation is to neglect a vital component in the learners' reading trajectory. One cannot teach the skills of reading only, one needs also to focus on the will to

read. A good reader has both 'skill and will' for reading and it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that both are developed in learners.

What does reading motivation look like in teaching reading?

Teachers' practice in relation to reading motivation is about developing and sustaining learners' reading interest (Marinak & Gambrell 2008). This includes providing scaffolding to get learners to engage in reading and transition from what they are able to read on their own, to what they would need assistance with when reading longer and more advanced texts.

Learners are not simply going to be motivated because you encourage them to be motivated and give them verbal praise or tangible rewards for reading because these external incentives are short term and do not sustain interest in reading. The pedagogical practices you use when teaching reading and the opportunities you provide for learners to engage in reading should contribute towards sustained reading (Marinak & Gambrell 2008). The provision of an environment conducive to reading may help develop their potential to continue to engage in sustained reading (McGeown 2013). An environment conducive to reading is one where children are explicitly taught decoding skills (as decoding gives learners access to a text) but it also includes thinking about how you can build interest and enthusiasm, instil a culture of perseverance and build self-confidence (based on skill).

Self-assessment activities

These are 'quickie' assessment activities to check how well you have understood key concepts discussed in this unit and whether you are able to perceive the pedagogical implications of such concepts in the teaching of reading.

Note: The key to these self-assessment activities is given in the Appendix at the end of this module. If you score less than 6/8 (75%) for these questions you are advised to re-read the unit again to strengthen your content and pedagogic knowledge.

1. In each of the statements below provide **the appropriate missing word (or words)**. (5)

    a) Being willing to engage in reading is referred to as reading _____.

    b) A learner who voluntarily reads storybooks because s/he gets enjoyment from them shows _____ motivation, while a learner who only reads when s/he is told to do so is only driven by _____ motivation.

    c) Our mindset refers to _____ we have about something and the values we attach to it.

    d) If children have had early negative experiences with reading, then using strategies

that rely on _____ motivation can help to kick-start them into a making an effort with reading, which in turn can bring about a more positive mindset to reading.

2. Indicate which one of the following statements is **false**. (1)

   a) Motivating learners to read include the following elements: role modelling, interest, engagement, self-efficacy, perseverance, mindset, rewards.

   b) Teachers who encourage children to make an effort and to keep going despite difficulties downplay the joy of reading and create a negative attitude to reading.

   c) Self-efficacy in relation to reading refers to the feelings that learners have about their ability to read a text and succeed at it.

   d) Learners who play up in class and disrupt other learners and who avoid reading by doing other things often have low self-efficacy in relation to reading and fear failure.

3. Indicate which of the following statements is the correct one. (1)

   a) Successful readers are motivated readers. Learning to read is actually easy and when children learn to love reading, they become successful readers.

   b) Teachers who seldom read in their private or professional lives and who seldom talk about books with their learners in the classroom have a good chance of motivating learners to read.

   c) If teachers teach children decoding skills effectively then they do not have to attend to motivating their learners to read.

   d) Interest is an important part of motivation. But even if learners initially have little or no interest in a story or topic, the discussion that a teacher initiates in the class and her ability to get learners to engage with the text can change their level of interest.

4. Consider the following scenario and then indicate which one of the options **is irrelevant to or an inaccurate reflection** of this scenario. (1)

Teacher Nhlahla has created a print-rich classroom and has an interesting and inviting Book Corner with plenty of storybooks in isiZulu and English. However, several learners in his class have low reading motivation. For example, there are two little boys who don't like to read storybooks because "That's what girls do". Several learners struggle to read and never go the Book Corner voluntarily. He has also noticed that some learners will only select easy books from the Book Corner and avoid books that are slightly longer or have more sentences per page.

The low levels of reading motivation in the class can be improved if Teacher Nhlanhla motivates his learners to read and explains how important reading is in life.

a) The two little boys who think that reading is associated with girls show that reading motivation can be influenced by mindset.

b) It's important for Teacher Nhlanhla to also improve the decoding skills of learners because motivation on its own will not enable learners to make sense of the text.

c) The learners who select only easy books to read point to the role that feelings of self-efficacy and confidence in one's ability to read can affect what one reads.

Unit 7: Strategies for developing children's reading motivation

Introduction

This unit focuses on various ways that teachers can develop their learners' reading motivation, based on Gambrell's (2011) rules of engagement while reading.

Engaging children in reading

Gambrell (2011:173-177) provides a useful set of rules for engaging children in reading:

Table 10: Seven rules of engagement

Seven Rules of Engagement	
1.	Learners are more motivated to read when the reading tasks and activities are relevant to their lives.
2.	Learners are more motivated to read when they have access to a wide range of reading materials.
3.	Learners are more motivated to read when they have ample opportunities to engage in sustained reading.
4.	Learners are more motivated to read when they have opportunities to make choices about what they read and how they engage in and complete literacy tasks.
5.	Learners are more motivated to read when they have opportunities to socially interact with others about the text they are reading.
6.	Learners are more motivated to read when they have opportunities to be successful with challenging texts.
7.	Learners are more motivated to read when classroom incentives reflect the value and importance of reading.

Interest in reading

> *Learners are motivated to read when the reading tasks and activities are relevant to their lives (Gambrell 2011)*

A reader should be interested in the books, materials or any other resources they read because interest in a particular text sustains attention on the task. This increases the amount of time the reader engages with the text. Showing interest in a particular text is often associated with greater ease in the meaning being evoked in the reader. Finding value and meaning in a reading text or

task is one way to enhance reading motivation and achievement (Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, Humenick & Littles 2007).

Exploring the humour in the texts that the children read can motivate them to read. If children are able to experience African language storybooks and texts as fun, they are more likely to want to engage in reading. Consider the following extract from this Vula Bula Grade 3 reader (Molteno Institute for Language and Literacy 2016).

Practical tip: incorporating humour into reading

You can incorporate the materials from texts like these for a Listening and Speaking lesson or Shared Reading lesson. Be mindful how you read the text and demonstrate the humour in the story.

Yihora lesithupha ekuseni, uVusi usegumbini lakhe lokulala. Ulungiselela ukuya esikoleni. Ugqoka ihembe lesikole elimhlophe, ijezi lesikole eliluhlaza okwesibhakabhaka kanye nesikhindi esimpunga. Ugqoka isokisi elilodwa elimpunga.

UVusi usefuna ukugqoka elinye isokisi, akalitholi. Ufuna ngaphansi kwezingubo zokulala. Ulifuna ngaphansi kombhede. Ulifuna phakathi ezicathulweni. Ulifuna ekhabetheni. Akalitholi.

UVusi ubuyisa umqondo wakhe. 'Mhlawumbe isokisi lami lisediloweni. Ake ngiyobheka.'

Uya ekhabetheni lezimpahla ufika udonsa idilowa.

2

https://vulabula.molteno.co.za/reader/grade-3-reader-1a-sesotho

Finding value and meaning in a text goes beyond a learner understanding the literal meaning of a text. It is the personal connection one makes with a text that increases its value, and teachers must show learners how to do this and be role models of enjoying and connecting with text. When children make connections between the material they are reading and their lives, they become more involved and engaged in comprehending text (Deci 1992). For example, a child reading a graded reader about people that help us in the community might evoke emotions of their own experiences with people who have helped them in their own community. On the other hand, children might have experienced neglect or marginalisation in their community. This links to the therapeutic role of literature in helping us deal with life's challenges (called bibliotherapy). The connection learners make with the text can motivate children to continue to read and sustain their interest in the book. In order to make meaning or connections with a text, one needs to reflect on what one reads.

Practical tip

The following are examples of how the teacher can help learners reflect on the meaning of the text or book they have read.

Learners in the Foundation Phase often have a busy book where they are free to write or draw anything in the book. This is a strategy to keep them busy after classwork. They can write a few sentences on how the self-selected reading material during reading connects with their own lives. They can also draw a picture to relate this reflective task.

Learners in the Intermediate Phase can keep a journal/diary where they reflect on how they feel about the self-selected reading material during reading or how it connects with (or is different from) their own lives. Reading also enables learners to read about people or places that are different from their own lives, thereby expanding their horizons and introducing them to diverse people and places.

Variety of reading material

> *Learners are more motivated to read when they have a wide range of reading materials (Gambrell 2011).*

Motivation to read and reading achievement are higher when the classroom environment is rich in reading materials and includes books from a variety of genres and text types, magazines, resource materials, the internet, and everyday-life documents. Providing a rich variety of reading materials communicates to the learners that reading is a worthwhile and valuable activity and sets the stage for learners to develop the habit of reading (McGeown 2013).

Often in the Foundation Phase, children are given graded readers containing fictional texts. These texts have an inherent potential for stimulating imaginative thinking, but young children also

benefit from reading non-fictional (i.e., information) texts as well in order to learn new things.

Teachers can help learners find meaning or a personal connection to the text, even whilst reading a graded reader. The kind of questions the teacher asks the learners about the book can be an effective motivational method.

What about a lack of resources?

Finding enough reading materials in various genres may be a tough requirement for teachers in Quintile 1 to 3 schools which often lack resources. But student teachers can learn to create their own reading materials in the African languages. Consider the examples below:

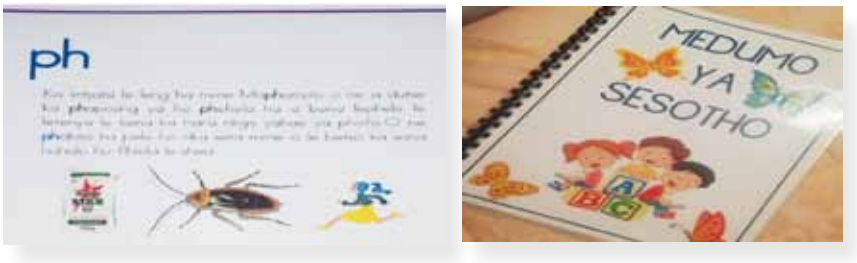


Figure 11: Examples of materials created by University of Johannesburg BEd students

There are also many resources on the internet for those who have access to Wi-Fi. Some of these are provided by the Department of Basic Education and some by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that produce reading texts in the African languages:

- 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 lesson plans (Second Additional Language) Grades 1 to 3 *https://www.education.gov.za/Curriculum/ LearningandTeachingSupportMaterials(LTSM)/IIALResources.aspx*
- Funda Wande *https://fundawande.org/learning-resources*
- 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*
- Ulwazi Lwethu: *https://www.ulwazilwethu.org.za*

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 creative writing skills.

Reading corners

It is important for student teachers to learn how to design reading corners in the classroom to serve as a special space to encourage a culture of reading in the classroom. This is where a variety of material can be displayed. Student teachers can use their creative energy to find cheap and simple ways to create an enticing reading corner that will attract learners. Bricks and planks can be used if there is no bookcase, friends and family can donate a children's book, cushion or small carpet!

Figure 12: Creating an attractive Reading Corner

Time for reading

> *Learners are more motivated to read when they have many opportunities to engage in sustained reading (Gambrell 2011).*

According to Hiebert (2009), one source of children's lack of motivation to read can be traced to an insufficient amount of time spent reading in classrooms. Developing reading motivation is not about lots of different activities but ensuring that the time spent on reading is meaningful and that children develop an understanding of the topic that the text deals with.

The frequency with which children engage in reading is important. Children who read daily are more likely to develop a culture of reading and will gradually increase time spent on reading.

Sustained reading is dependent on two factors:

- the amount of time spent on reading and
- the frequency with which reading occurs.

CAPS (2011) provides guidelines per grade as to the number of hours teachers should spend teaching reading and the type of reading activity that should be done. Reading can take place in Shared Reading, Group Guided Reading, Paired Reading and Independent Reading (the latter two done during GGR when the teacher is working with one group) – and for homework. Teachers can also read to them in Read Alouds. Paired Reading gives learners opportunities to read to one another for at least 10 minutes while the teacher is busy with Group Guided Reading with another group. Children need to practise the skill of reading in order to become better at it. A study by Taylor, Pearson, Clark, and Walpole (1999) investigated the effects of time spent reading in and out of school on reading achievement and their findings showed that the time spent reading in school corresponded highly with reading achievement. In addition, Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala and Cox (1999) found that the amount of time spent reading in and out of school predicted reading comprehension.

Practical tip

Promote a habit of sustained reading in the classroom and at home:

- Children who do not like reading often find it difficult to enjoy reading (Gambrell 1996). As a teacher, you need to identify what the learner is struggling with and use appropriate strategies and methods to support them. For instance, if a child has difficulty in decoding words, make sure that they know the letter-sound relationships and how to blend phonemes to form syllables and words.

Follow the CAPS (2011) guidelines on how much time should be spent on various reading tasks. This includes individual reading, paired reading, shared reading and group guided reading.

Where possible, promote parental involvement by asking parents to listen to learners read at home. This can assist with developing a culture of reading at home.

Learner choice

> *Learners are more motivated to read when they have opportunities to make choices about what they read and how they engage in and complete literacy tasks (Gambrell 2011).*

The freedom to choose their own texts has a great influence on teaching children to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning (Rettig & Hendricks 2000).

Think about your own reading experiences. If you are reading the newsfeed on your phone, you

just see the headings of the articles; it is you who chooses to read what interests you. The same happens with children. Although they may have to read prescribed books or graded readers, there is still room for freedom of choice. As a teacher, you can allow learners to choose books from the school library or your classroom Book Corner. For instance, if you know that they have to read three or four books per term, which have similar cognitive difficulty, you can allow the learners to choose which one they want to read first. Choice has the power to sustain interest in a text because there is a sense of ownership and they can be held accountable if they do not read the book, simply because they chose it. Studies indicate that motivation increases when learners have opportunities to make choices about what they learn and when they believe they have some autonomy or control over their own learning (Skinner & Belmont 1993; Jang, Reeve & Deci 2010).

In a study by Patall, Cooper and Wynn (2010), the authors compared the performance of learners who were allowed to choose their homework assignment from a number of acceptable options and those who were given no option to choose. The findings revealed that learners who were given a choice had higher intrinsic motivation, felt more competent and performed better on assessments than students who were assigned homework without choice. The researchers concluded that providing choices is an effective way to support the development of intrinsic motivation.

It appears that learners who are allowed to choose some of their own reading materials are more motivated to read, expend more effort, and gain better understanding of the text (Gambrell 1996).

Practical tip

Pair the learners during your teaching practice (Work Integrated Learning) in a language lesson. Allow the learners to source a reading piece that they find on their own. This can be from a storybook (or a newspaper or magazine article for Intermediate Phase learners). Learners can choose a text that addresses a subject matter that interests them. Each learner reads a paragraph or two to their partner and explains why they selected this particular text. The partner asks at least 5 questions e.g. 2 vocabulary questions, 2 content questions and 1 inferential question. Each learner tells the partner at least one new thing (a word, information about the text) they learned from the text after reading/listening to it. You interact with the learners according to their groups.

Social interaction

> *Learners are more motivated to read when they have opportunities to socially interact with others about the text they are reading (Gambrell 2011).*

Providing children with opportunities to interact with each other about what they are reading is important for developing deeper thinking about what they read (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand,

and Gamoran, 2003). Social interaction in the context of reading is defined as communicating with others, through written form and discussions about what has been read. Social interaction in reading can include activities where children talk about books or texts they have read with others.

Social interaction during reading can contribute to enhancing extrinsic reading motivation during reading in a variety of ways, according to Turner and Paris (1995).

Firstly, when learners engage in activities such as **Turn and Talk** with a partner, they benefit from learning to listen to other learners' viewpoints in order to deepen their understanding of the text.

Secondly, observations of their peers' progress may increase their confidence in their own ability to succeed (Ng, Guthrie, Van Meter, McCann & Alao 1998).

Thirdly, working with others promotes learner interest and engagement in the reading task (Turner & Paris 1995). It also makes learners aware that people in a group can have different views and this helps to develop tolerance.

Practical tip

Use Turn and Talk after engaging in a Shared Reading text or a Read Aloud. Children should talk about what they have read or listened to. This gives children an opportunity to think about the text and what they understood from it. Each learner gets an opportunity to share their thoughts. This is one way of developing critical thinking. Alternatively, you can pose a question for children to talk about based on the shared reading text.

Appropriately challenging texts

> *Learners are more motivated to read when they have opportunities to be successful with challenging texts (Gambrell 2011).*

Learners don't grow when they read only short, simple texts. Create opportunities for reading texts that are at a grade appropriate level as well as texts that are slightly above their reading level that challenge them to enrich their vocabulary and reading abilities in general. Success in reading should be balanced between texts that are at a grade appropriate level and those which challenge the learner to learn new vocabulary, engage in other genres and are longer.

A reading task that overwhelms a child is an indicator that either the learner is struggling with the text even though it is at the grade-appropriate level or that the text is too difficult a level for the learner. If the text is too difficult, the reader is more likely to give up. On the other hand, if the text is too easy, the reader is more likely to become bored, play around or simply memorise the text (Schunk and Zimmerman, 1997).

Motivating reading tasks are those that are moderately challenging and require the learner to decode some words that are unfamiliar within that particular text.

The teacher needs to **scaffold** the reading tasks so that learners can engage productively during reading. A productive struggle yields successful reading once the learner is able to apply the appropriate decoding method to be able to read words. Success with challenging reading tasks provides learners with evidence of accomplishment. This sense of accomplishment increases feelings of competence and leads to increased motivation (Schunk & Zimmerman 1997).

Appropriate incentives

> *Learners are more motivated to read when classroom incentives reflect the value and importance of reading (Gambrell 2011).*

Teacher praise, if it is sincere and appropriate, can be a powerful (external) motivator in reading. Such praise can be about learners' recognition of new words, using these words in their own context and being able to apply rules taught about phonics when learning new words. Simply praising children for the sake of praise is 'cheap talk' and does not necessarily benefit children. Extrinsic motivation is valuable for improving the visible practices of reading by promoting a culture of reading. Teacher praise, which sincerely recognises learners' achievement, can lead to increased feelings of competence and motivation for the learners because they have engaged in productive struggle and accomplished the reading task (Gambrell & Marinak 1997; Guthrie & Wigfield 2000).

However, extrinsic rewards do not always lead to sustained reading motivation (Gambrell 2011). Teacher praise could be more motivational than tangible incentives such as prizes. However, teacher praise is not always effective if the learners perceive teacher praise to be deceitful or unmerited if the praise did not match the learner's performance (Gambrell 2011). This may lead to decreased levels of motivation because the learners may feel that the praise is not a true reflection of their reading ability (Guthrie & Wigfield 2000).

Research is less clear about the effects of tangible incentives, such as prizes, on learners' motivation and performance. In essence, tangible incentives have been found to undermine the development of intrinsic motivation in older children (Deci 1992). However, younger children can be tremendously motivated by external incentives, even by simple rewards such as a star stuck on their forehead.

Assessing reading motivation

Being highly motivated to read does not, on its own, make one a good reader. Howie, Van Staden, Tshele, Dowse and Zimmerman (2012) reported on the PIRLS (2011) results about South African learners who were also assessed on several aspects related to reading. They report a general

finding that 68% of learners reported that they were motivated to read. The following questions were asked in order to get a sense of whether or not learners engaged in reading (Howie *et al*. 2012).

Motivation scale questions (Pre-PIRLS (2011))

1. I like to read things that make me think.
2. It is important to be a good reader.
3. My parents like it when I read.
4. I learn a lot from reading.
5. I need to read well for my future.
6. I like it when a book helps me imagine other worlds.

The survey found that although most (68%) of South African learners wanted to engage in reading, this did not correspond well with their confidence in reading, which was very low (18%). Although their motivation was quite high, their performance on the PIRLS assessment was poor, which suggests that motivation on its own is not sufficient – children also need skill in reading. The results suggest that assessing the motivation of learners is an important guide to what their success level will be in reading. Motivation is important as a factor in the engagement of learners in reading and they cannot become better without engaging in reading.

Assessing genre knowledge

Hidi and Harackiewicz (2000) proposed a series of questions that aim at capturing children's understanding of different genres (narrative and information texts) and how they relate to reading comprehension. These questions relate to different aspects of reading motivation such as interest, perceived control, collaboration, efficacy, and involvement.

These questions can be useful for teachers to ask learners during reading-related activities. Though it is not prescribed that teachers assess reading motivation it can be beneficial if they know the kinds of questions that can be used as baseline assessment for reading motivation (Hidi & Harackiewicz 2000).

Broad questions to engage children in reading books

1. What is your all-time favourite book?
2. What do you like best about reading?
3. Do you think of yourself as a reader? Why or why not?
4. Why do you spend time reading?

5. Are there other things you like to read besides books?
6. Is reading important to you? What makes you think that?
7. What do you like to do for fun?

They also provide guidelines for asking questions when reading narrative texts.

Questions to engage children when they read narrative texts

Warm up

1. Where did you get this book?
2. What is it about?

Interest

3. Was this book interesting? Tell me more about that.
4. What kinds of books are interesting to you?

Perceived control

5. Did you choose this book?
6. Why did you pick this one?
7. Do you like it more when someone else gives you a book or when you pick a book yourself?

Collaboration

8. Did you talk to anyone about this book?
9. Did you read this book aloud with anyone?
10. Do you ever talk about or read books with other people?

Efficacy

11. Were you good at reading this book? What made you think that?
12. Were there any hard parts in this book? What did you do when you came to those parts?
13. How do you know whether you are a good reader?

Involvement

14. About how long did it take you to read this book? How many days, and how many minutes each day? When do you usually read?
15. Was this book so good you could not stop reading it?
16. How often do you spend a lot of time reading a book?

In similar vein, they provide guidelines for asking questions about information books.

Questions to engage children when they read information texts

Warm-up

1. Where did you get this book?
2. What is it about?

Interest

3. Was this book interesting? Tell me more about that.
4. What kinds of books are interesting to you?

Perceived control

5. Did you choose this book?
6. Why did you pick this one?

Collaboration

7. Did you talk to anyone about this book?
8. Did you read this book aloud with anyone?
9. Do you ever talk about or read books with other people?

Efficacy

10. Were you good at reading this book? What makes you think that?
11. Were there any hard parts in this book? What did you do when you came to those parts?
12. How do you know whether you are a good reader?

Involvement

13. How long did it take you to read this book? How many days, and how many minutes each day?
14. When do you usually read?
15. Was this book so good you could not stop reading it?
16. How often do you spend a lot of time reading a book?

Conclusion to reading motivation

This section provided a discussion of the importance of motivation in reading, a review of the literature regarding reading motivation, and ways for teachers to develop children's motivation to read. Practical examples, learning tasks and reflective tasks were included to assist the student teacher in developing an understanding of motivation as an important consideration in developing reading in the Foundation and Intermediate Phase.

Self-assessment activities

These are 'quickie' assessment activities to check how well you have understood key concepts discussed in this unit and whether you are able to perceive the pedagogical implications of such concepts in the teaching of reading.

Note: The key to these self-assessment activities is given in the Appendix at the end of this module. If you score less than 6/8 (75%) for these questions you are advised to re-read the unit again to strengthen your content and pedagogic knowledge.

1. In each of the statements below provide **the appropriate missing word (or words)**. (5)

   a) Children who can read a text on their own for a period of time without becoming distracted are engaged in _____ reading.

   b) When children find texts interesting and make connections between the text and their own lives, we say that they _____ with the texts.

   c) A space in a classroom where books are displayed in an interesting way and children encouraged to sit down and read books is called a _____.

   d) Interest in reading is stimulated if readers are exposed to a variety of books. Nonfiction books on a specific topic are called _____books.

   e) Social interaction in the context of reading is important for reading motivation. Shared Reading and _____ where two readers sit together are two CAPS activities that are ideal for promoting social interaction during reading.

2. Indicate which one of the following statements is **false**. (1)

   a) Even in schools that serve disadvantaged communities, motivation to read and reading achievement are higher when teachers create print-rich classroom environments and Reading Corners.

b) CAPS requires teachers to assess children's motivation to read by the end of Grade 3.

c) If teachers give appropriate support and guidance, then success with more challenging reading tasks provides learners with a sense of accomplishment, which in turn increases reading motivation.

d) Children's storybooks are often humorous and this can help to stimulate an interest in books and reading.

3. Indicate which of the following statements is the correct one. (1)

a) Research has found that extrinsic rewards lead to sustained reading motivation in the long term.

b) The difficulty of a text can affect reading motivation; learners are more likely to enjoy reading if they are always given texts that are simple and easy.

c) Reading Corners are not needed in a Grade R classroom because these learners cannot read on their own yet and so will not be motivated to visit the Reading Corner.

d) External incentives such as teacher praise and awarding stars to learners who make an effort can help to motivate reluctant learners to take an interest in reading, especially in the early grades.

4. Consider again the scenario with Teacher Thandi and her new words, and then indicate which one of the options **is irrelevant to or an inaccurate reflection** of this scenario. (1)

Teacher Thandi enthusiastically starts her Grade 2 class each Monday morning by saying: "Good morning, my children. I can't wait to share my new word with you this morning! It is ..... (she says the word and writes it on the board at the same time). Let's all say this word aloud. (Learners say the word aloud together). Has anyone ever heard of this word? No, I expect not as it is a rather big word in isiZulu/Sesotho. It means ……(she explains the meaning, identifies its root, and uses the word in a sentence to show how it is used). I came across the word while I was reading a book in isiZulu/Sesotho called ------". She holds up the book to show them. (She often changes the context in which she encountered the new word.) "Now children, I'll stick star on the forehead of the first learner who uses this word correctly in a sentence today." She holds up a stick-

on star. "But you must use this word correctly, ne!" she smiles. "I wonder who will be our vocabulary star this morning!"

a) By using a star as a reward for using the new word in a sentence, the teacher is using extrinsic motivation to stimulate vocabulary development.

b) Providing opportunities for learners to use new words in meaningful contexts can help learners to see the connection between reading and new knowledge.

c) It is unfortunate that Teacher Thandi relies on external motivation to stimulate vocabulary development and a culture of reading in her class.

d) Role-modelling interest in words and love of language can be a powerful means of stimulating reading motivation in learners.

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Appendix

Key to self-assessment activities

Key to Unit 1

1a BICS/Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills.
1b Phonological awareness
1c exposure to language
1d teacher talk
1e metalinguistic skills
2b
3d
4b

Key to Unit 2

1a open question … closed question
1b genres
1c baseline assessments … formative assessments
2d
3b
4d (although the learners take turns, this is a procedural activity, not an activity for turn-taking in conversation)

Key to Unit 3

1a the phoneme
1b phonemic awareness
1c phonemic awareness
1d iii the easiest …..ii tend to be more challenging
2c
3a
4b

Key to Unit 4

1a receptive
1b 95%
1c bird

1d register
1e root
2a
3c
4a (opportunities for incidental learning occur in discussion and dialogue)

Key to Unit 5

1a awareness/consciousness
1b idiomatic expressions
1c Grade R to Grade 2
1d Grade 2
2d
3a
4c (she identifies the root of the word, thus tapping into morphology)

Key to Unit 6

1a motivation
1b intrinsic … extrinsic
1c
2b
3d
4a

Key to Unit 7

1a sustained
1b engage/interact
1c Reading Corner
1d information
1e Paired Reading
2b
3d
4c

Examples of summative questions requiring longer, more detailed responses

The questions given here serve as *examples* of summative assessment questions that are typically given in formal written assignments or examinations.

These are longer essay type questions that require students to demonstrate their content knowledge of reading and its application to classroom instruction in ways that are **clear** and **systematically** presented.

The mark allocation for questions provides a *rough* guide of how long your answer needs to be in relation to the total marks allocated to the examination paper. A question of 10 marks would require at least 1-1½ pages, while a 20-mark question requires a more detailed and extensive exposition of about 2-3 pages. When in doubt, rather write more than less. Remember, your response to a question is a display of your knowledge, so short answers suggest superficial and inadequate knowledge.

A rubric has been provided at the end to give you an idea of the different aspects of an essay that are taken into consideration, e.g. planning and logic; content, argumentation and examples; use of sources; language usage; technical finishing.

Note: When questions require examples to be provided, it is important for students to give their own, original examples and not simply copy examples from the module. Examples demonstrate whether students understand the content. Students who copy examples from the module will not be given credit for them; only original examples will be accepted.

1. Language comprises units of different sizes. Starting with the biggest unit, namely the sentence, indicate how this language unit can be broken down into smaller constituent parts until you get to the smallest units. Explain how each of these units of language relate to learning to read. (20)

2. Explain what oral language proficiency is and why it is important for learning to read. (10)

3. Name and describe four principles that underpin the development of oral language. In each case, show how teachers can implement them in the classroom during Listening and Speaking. (20)

4. Work out two lesson plans for Grade 1 learners, demonstrating how you would teach them to follow the rules that govern social interaction during two Listening and Speaking lessons (of 15 minutes each) during the week. (Consult Unit 2 to make sure that you integrate the various rules listed in Table 1 across the two Listening and Speaking lessons.) (40)

5. Explain the difference between phonological awareness and phonemic awareness and give relevant examples in each case. Explain why phonemic awareness is essential for learning to read in African languages. (10)

6. Describe, with relevant examples, what segmenting and blending entail in terms of learning to read. Explain why these competencies are important for learning to read. (10)

7. Why is an understanding of morphology important for BEd students who are training to become reading teachers in the African languages? Explain how morphology can impact both on learning to read and on vocabulary learning. Give relevant examples to support your arguments. (20)

8. How can you, as a reading teacher, extend the learners' vocabulary in and outside school? Select and describe five methods or strategies that will apply in your classroom to increase your learners' vocabulary in the Home Language. (20)

9. Explain what the important points are for teaching FP learners how to use an isiZulu or Sesotho dictionary. (10)

10. *It is important for teachers to assess learners' vocabulary knowledge, to inform their teaching, to monitor whether their efforts to increase vocabulary knowledge in the classroom are effective, and to identify children who are lagging in vocabulary development.*

    Although standardised vocabulary tests are currently not available in African languages, this should not deter vocabulary development and its assessment in Foundation Phase classrooms. Explain how you plan to assess your learners' vocabulary in isiZulu/Sesotho on a regular basis throughout one term. (Identify the grade that you will be assessing and make sure your assessment plans are feasible and will provide you with useful data to inform your teaching.) (20)

11. *"You need to be motivated in order to succeed!" Many people talk about motivation but few really know what motivation is.*

    Explain what reading motivation is and discuss the role it plays in reading development. (20)

12. Gambrell (2011) mentions seven rules of engagement for children when they read, which are prerequisites for motivating children to engage with the text in order to become more successful readers. Describe these rules and provide examples of how they can be applied to encourage children to become better readers. (40)

13. *Creating an interesting and usable Reading Corner depends on the practical and creative ideas of the teacher, not on the affluence of the school.*

    Explain important points to bear in mind when developing a Reading Corner in a classroom in a school that serves a disadvantaged community. Explain how you will go about sourcing texts in African languages for the Reading Corner. (20)Rubric for essay type assignments

Rubric for longer essay type assessments

The rubric below can be used to mark summative assignments. The mark allocations are examples only to show how different aspects of the essay are evaluated. They can be adjusted proportionately to the total mark of an assignment.

CRITERIA	Below expectation	Progressing towards expectation	Meets expectation	Exceeds expectation	Score
Planning and logic of exposition	The work lacks proper planning; no problem statement/aim/purpose statement; no logic exposition. Findings reported unsystematically. No conclusion/ recommendations.	Planning mostly lacking; exposition difficult to follow; findings could be reported more clearly. Headings and subheadings reflect some organisation.	Provides a satisfactory exposition and discusses the topic logically and clearly. However, there are areas that need improvement. Not all facets of the topic have necessarily been adequately addressed.	The exposition of the assignment is excellent; the argumentation is logic and absolutely clear; the reader has no problem following the discussion.	
Maximum 20	1-5	6-11	12-17	18-20	
Content, argumentation and examples	The content is poor. The arguments do not build up systematically. Examples are inappropriate.	Parts of the content is relevant. There are instances of staccato-like argumentation. Some examples illustrate the principles well while others don't.	The content is relevant and well structured. The argumentation is systematic. The examples are appropriate for the purpose they have been used.	The content is excellent. The examples have been integrated excellently in the text to strengthen the argumentation.	
Maximum 30	1-9	10-17	18-25	26-30	

Information gathering and use of sources **Maximum 20**	No sources used, or seminal sources not consulted. Sources misinterpreted. Improper recognition of sources. 1-5	Some authoritative sources have been used; there are errors in the recording of sources; in some instances recognition has not been given to sources. 6-11	Consulted sources have been duly listed. The most important sources have been consulted. The sources have been interpreted correctly. There are a few errors in terms of information gathering though. 12-17	Authoritative sources have been consulted; all consulted sources have been listed correctly. The referencing is correct, and sources have not been misinterpreted or mispresented. 18-20	
Language usage **Maximum 15**	The formulation is clumsy and there are many grammatical and/or spelling errors in the text. Sentences often make no sense. 1-3	The formulation is fair but there are instances of poor sentence structure/ grammar/ spelling errors. 4-8	The language usage is very good. There are no instances of poor formulation or grammatical errors; there may be a few spelling errors. 9-13	The academic language usage is excellent. There are no instances of poor formulation or grammatical or spelling errors. 14-15	
Technical finishing **Maximum 15**	The formatting is poor. The assignment lacks headings; it lacks cohesion; there may be repetitions; punctuation is also wrong in places. 1-3	The formatting is not always good; the headings may be inappropriate or confusing; there are instances of poor punctuation. 4-8	The formatting is very good; headings are appropriately used. There is cohesion and coherence in the text. Punctuation is good. 9-13	The formatting is excellent; headings and subheadings are immaculate; cohesion and coherence are excellent. Punctuation is exceptional. 14-15	
Notes to student:					