FOREWORD

This Teacher’s Guide has been put together from the Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation survey that the Department conducted in 2004. It provides information about what our learners were able and not able to do in the survey. It also provides “Tips for teaching” which teachers could add to their existing repertoire of skills and use in addressing the challenges that learners were found to be experiencing in learning.

Opening the doors of learning to all, and ensuring the achievement of measurable, high quality educational outcomes, remain the major commitments of the education sector in South Africa, and the survey has assisted in this regard.

Significant strides have been made in improving access to education, and in improving the quality of our schools. The magnitude of the task, in terms of extent of socio-cultural deprivation, and the number of affected children, determines that, unless we take periodic “snapshots” of the system, we will not be able to tell whether our efforts are bearing fruit, and where we are not achieving the gains we seek. Through the two Systemic Evaluations, the first at Grade 3 in 2001, and this one in 2004, we have been able, in a scientific manner, to deepen and sharpen our understanding of the system, and to define the extent and nature of the challenges we still face. This will enable us to tackle these in a more focused manner.

The findings relating to performance, as summarised in this guide, give us some insight into the performance of Grade 6 learners in the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) in the study. The findings also showed possible connections that can be made between performance and the conditions of learning that children face both at home and at school. In our quest to address issues of access, equity and quality, it is evident that we need to intensify our interventions, which address issues of provision of teaching and learning resources as well as sharpening the professional competence of our teachers.

The chief purpose of this guide is to share the wealth of information generated through the Systemic Evaluation mainly with teachers, but also with school managers and learners themselves, and to share with these key role players the challenge of continuously improving our performance. It should not be the basis for pointing fingers or laying blame; instead the results should challenge all of us to reflect on the roles we play, and how we perform them. We must, as a nation, ensure that our young people emerge from school armed with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to study further, to enter the world of work, and to participate meaningfully in society.

DB Hindle
Director-General: Department of Education
Pretoria, South Africa
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**ACRONYMS**

- DoE: Department of Education
- FAL: First Additional Language
- HL: Home Language
- IP: Intermediate Phase
- LOLT: Language of Learning and Teaching
- LO: Learning Outcome
- MCQ: Multiple-choice question
- NCS: National Curriculum Statement
- SA: Short answer
- SE: Systemic Evaluation
- SKVA: Skills, knowledge, values and attitudes
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TEACHER’S GUIDE: LANGUAGES

1. INTRODUCTION

The systemic evaluation surveys enable the education system to assess achievement of the anticipated skills, knowledge, values and attitudes (SKVAs) and identify areas for improvement. The study that was conducted at the Grade 6 level in 2004 has provided useful information on learner achievement of important competencies in the language of learning and teaching (LOLT).

The purpose of this guide is to:
• share information on what learners were able and not able to do in the language task
• provide examples of questions used in the systemic evaluation as well as typical answers that learners gave
  • provide some “Tips for teaching” that teachers could try in their classrooms to address similar problems among learners.

1.1 Overall performance of learners

Overall performance in the LOLT was low. The national average score was 38 percent.

Performance was higher where learners gave short answers and also in multiple-choice questions.

Learners were able to provide correct answers where they had to read text to find specific information.

Where learners had to write their own answers, performance was lower.

Learners were not able to:
• write meaningful sentences
• construct own sentences
• summarise text
• recall information from the listening task and write it correctly
• spell words correctly.

1.2 Structure of the guide

This diagram gives an overview of the guide layout:

2. WHAT WAS ASSESSED IN THE LANGUAGE?

2.1 How good are learners at listening?
2.2 Assessment of learners’ reading skills
2.3 Assessment of writing skills
2.4 Assessing thinking and reasoning skills
2.5 Assessing learners’ use of language structure

3. THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

3.1 Overall distribution of learner scores
3.2 Performance according to levels of achievement
3.3 Performance by learning outcomes
3.4 Performance by question type
3.5 Performance by gender
3.6 Performance by LOLT
3.7 Performance by location of school
2. WHAT WAS ASSESSED IN LANGUAGE?

The language task was made up of two components: a Listening Comprehension and a Reading and Writing component.

Competencies assessed:

- **Listening Comprehension**
  - Listening
  - Writing
  - Reading and reasoning

- **Reading and Writing**
  - Reading and viewing
  - Writing
  - Thinking and reasoning
  - Language structure and use

Examples of the questions that learners had to answer, as well as those of learner responses, are provided.

**Tips for teaching** appear where you see this sign.

### 2.1 How good are learners at listening?

Two listening comprehension texts were given to assess learners’ listening skills. Each text was read twice while learners listened. The learners were then given time to provide written answers to questions from the text. The two texts and the questions that learners had to answer are given as examples of how the listening skill was assessed.
Example 1: Understanding oral text

In this exercise learners had to listen to a passage “The Power of Love” and show their understanding of the text by providing written answers to the questions that followed.

THE POWER OF LOVE

One day Thabo and his beautiful sister, Pulane, were playing in the veld. Suddenly a poisonous snake bit Pulane. Instantly Pulane vanished into the underworld.

Very heartbroken, Thabo took his favourite musical instrument, the guitar, and went to search for her in the underworld.

When Thabo entered the underworld, he was brought before the queen. He begged the queen to release his sister. The queen refused, but Thabo continued pleading with her. When he realised that she wouldn’t change her mind, he decided to charm her with his music. It softened her heart and she agreed to let Pulane go, but on one condition; that Thabo may not look at his sister as he leads her back to the outside world. Thabo promised the queen that he would not look at his sister before they were back in the outside world. Unfortunately he could not resist the temptation to look at her.

Just as he was leaving the underworld, he turned around and looked at his sister. Instantly Pulane vanished. Thabo was struck with grief and regret, because he had lost Pulane again.

Crying bitterly, he returned to the queen of the underworld. When he arrived, Pulane was already there. The queen was angry because Thabo had not obeyed her. She did not want to listen or speak to him. Thabo sat at the entrance and started playing sadly on his guitar. The music he played was so touching that it softened the queen’s heart again. She called him in and repeated the condition for Pulane’s release. Later the queen released his sister, but strongly emphasised that this time he had to obey her.

This time he did not make the same mistake. Thabo and Pulane went home safely and were very glad to be reunited with their family.

Write one (1) sentence to answer the question. Correct spelling and correct use of language will count in your favour.

Summarise what you have learnt from the story.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Example 1: Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response types</th>
<th>Mark allocation</th>
<th>Learners' performance (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer correctly spelt with the correct use of language</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer correctly spelt, or with the correct use of language</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer phonetically correct</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer totally incorrect</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nine percent of the learners obtained a full mark of 3. Eleven percent obtained 2 marks while 9 percent obtained 1 mark for answers that were phonetically correct but incorrectly spelt. Seventy-one percent of the learners answered the question incorrectly.

Let us now look at the learners’ responses.

Characteristics of Example 1

Learning outcome: LO 1: Listening

Assessment standard: Learner understands oral texts (e.g. recounts, sports commentaries):
- with support, retells and summarises

Question type: Extended response

Grade level: Grade 6

Difficulty level: High

Cognitive category: Reasoning

Correct answer(s):
- Always keep a promise.
- You must persevere.
- You must learn from your mistakes.
- Do not repeat mistakes.
- Love and care for your sister/brother/family.

[AND any other relevant response in the context of the passage]

Mark allocation: 3 marks

Scoring guide/key:
- 3 marks for correct spelling and correct use of language;
- 2 marks for correct spelling OR for correct use of language;
- 1 mark for a phonetically correct answer;
- 0 marks for the incorrect answer or no response

Learners’ performance (%):
- Answer correctly spelt with the correct use of language: 9%
- Answer correctly spelt, or with the correct use of language: 11%
- Answer phonetically correct: 9%
- Answer totally incorrect: 71%
Example 1: Learner responses

Correct responses

Write one (1) sentence to answer the question. Correct spelling and correct use of language will count in your favour.

Summarise what you have learnt from the story.

The moral of the story is:
KEEP YOUR PROMISES AND DON'T GIVE IN TO TEMPTATION.

Write one (1) sentence to answer the question. Correct spelling and correct use of language will count in your favour.

Summarise what you have learnt from the story.

You must not make a promise if you cannot keep it.

Incorrect responses

Write one (1) sentence to answer the question. Correct spelling and correct use of language will count in your favour.

Summarise what you have learnt from the story.

This is only Thin Tshobelo who is fully try body language.

Write one (1) sentence to answer the question. Correct spelling and correct use of language will count in your favour.

Summarise what you have learnt from the story.

So Papi K's swicke been under wory and Tabo is a

• The majority of learners could not summarise what they had learnt from the story.
• Most learners showed a lack of understanding of the story.
• Writing skills were lacking where learners were expected to construct sentences and express their thoughts.
Example 2: Recall of information

The text “Fun Day at Madiba Primary School” was read out to the learners. They were then assessed to find out how much information they could recall from listening to the text.

FUN DAY AT MADIBA PRIMARY SCHOOL

“Good morning, boys and girls”, said the principal of Madiba Primary School. On the first official school day of the new year, the learners were waiting anxiously and excitedly for the announcement that the principal would be making. The Grade 1 learners sat there with scared faces, not knowing what to expect.

“Last year our school held its annual fun day at the community sports field. Funds raised were used to build a computer centre. This year the funds raised will be used to buy the first few computers. We are looking at a target of R20 000”.

Eventually the big day arrived. It was clear that all the arrangements had been made very well. The excited children were looking forward to the activities that were offered. The cultural activities included songs and dances. There were games like sack races and water games. The Grade 6 learners competed against learners from other schools in soccer, volleyball, netball and rugby matches. They were the best!

Some parents were selling delicious eats like cakes, sweets, cold drinks and chips. The adults were fascinated by the computer demonstrations. The highlight of the day was when the band arrived and entertained the crowds.

At the end of a fun-filled but very exhausting day, the principal announced that they had reached the target of R20 000.

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At the end of a fun-filled but very exhausting day, the principal announced that they had reached the target of R20 000.

Write one (1) word to answer the question. Correct spelling will count in your favour.

Describe how the Grade 1 learners felt on the first day of school.
Characteristics of Example 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning outcome:</th>
<th>LO 1: Listening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment standard:</td>
<td>Learner understands stories (told or read to learners): • answers literal questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question type:</td>
<td>Short answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade level:</td>
<td>Grade 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty level:</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive category:</td>
<td>Reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct answer(s):</td>
<td>Scared / afraid / anxious / worried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark allocation:</td>
<td>2 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoring guide/key:</td>
<td>2 marks for correct spelling and correct use of language; 1 mark for a phonetically correct answer; 0 marks for the incorrect answer or no response</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 2: Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response types</th>
<th>Mark allocation</th>
<th>Learners' performance (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer correctly spelt with the correct use of language</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer phonetically correct</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer totally incorrect</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six percent of the learners obtained a full mark of 2. Sixteen percent were correct but had spelling mistakes and obtained 1 mark. Seventy-eight percent of the learners answered the question incorrectly.

Let us now look at the learners’ responses.
Example 2: Learner responses

Correct response

Write one (1) word to answer the question. Correct spelling will count in your favour.
Describe how the Grade 1 learners felt on the first day of school.

scared

Incorrect responses

Write one (1) word to answer the question. Correct spelling will count in your favour.
Describe how the Grade 1 learners felt on the first day of school.

They prepared well

Write one (1) word to answer the question. Correct spelling will count in your favour.
Describe how the Grade 1 learners felt on the first day of school.

the Grade 1 is Monday

Write one (1) word to answer the question. Correct spelling will count in your favour.
Describe how the Grade 1 learners felt on the first day of school.

Boy sorts

• Although the question was meant to be of medium difficulty, 78 percent of the learners could not answer it correctly. The key word to answering the question was “scared”. Because the LOLT was not a mother tongue for the majority of the learners, it is possible that they may have missed this adjective.
Tips for teaching

Developing listening skills

Learners appear to find it difficult to answer Listening Comprehension questions. It is important to do as many listening exercises as possible in the classroom to enable learners to develop listening skills.

Begin with simple exercises that develop their ability to listen to specific sounds:

- A basic activity which can be done regularly with learners is to ask them to be very quiet for a minute and then tell you what they can hear outside. If you can, take the learners outside for this activity.
- As the learners get older, focus on high-pitched sounds such as birdsong. Ask the learners if they can distinguish between more than one kind of bird song. The ability to do this prepares and helps the learner to distinguish between the different sounds in speech.

Before you progress to more complex listening comprehensions, ask learners to write down answers to questions or instructions you ask orally. These could be easy questions such as:

- Write down your full name.
- What is the name of the school principal / the president of South Africa?
- Which soccer team won the game on Saturday?

After an assembly where various announcements have been made, ask the learners questions to see how well they were listening, such as:

- Where is the soccer / netball team playing their next match?
- What was the score of the matches announced at assembly?
- Where are the Grade 7s going on tour?

Once you are sure that your learners are able to listen, recall and record what they have heard, you can begin with longer listening comprehensions.
Developing listening through a written text

Choose a short passage from a reader in your classroom. Ask the learners to listen while you read the story to them. Ask a few short questions that they answer orally and then ask them to listen while you read the story again. Ask them to answer at least five questions based on the passage.

It is important that learners gain practice in summarising the story. They need to learn to retell the main points of the story in just a few sentences.

To prepare to teach summarising, you must summarise the story yourself in your preparation for the lesson. Identify the key words and concepts that the summary must contain.

• Explain that summarising means just giving the key points of the story, not retelling the whole story.
• If learners struggle to summarise (and it is a higher order skill), you can help them by writing the key words on the board and tell them to make one sentence for each key word: this will result in them producing a summary.

Once they are able to summarise a story you can develop their cognitive skill by asking what they think is the message of the story, i.e. what they have learnt from the story.

For example, there may be a moral lesson in the story such as the importance of listening to one's parents. There could be a lesson such as becoming aware of the dangers of using and abusing drugs or alcohol. By the time they are in Grade 6, learners should be able to gain the underlying message of a story rather than just what is presented in the written text.

Listening activities often need very few materials and little preparation so that you can do a listening activity at the beginning of every language lesson.

In this way, learners can develop the skills of listening and recording what they have heard.
2.2 Assessment of learners’ reading skills

To assess reading skills and the ability to use words correctly, learners were given text to read in the form of a poem and an extract from a dictionary. They were expected to read and view information and then write answers to questions that assessed their ability to read critically. Examples of the texts, the questions and the learners’ responses are given in this guide.

Example 3: Reading text for information

Learners read the poem, “My Beautiful Body” and provided written answers to questions that followed.

Read the following poem and answer the question that follows.

MY BEAUTIFUL BODY

I love my body
It’s healthy
I exercise often
I choose my food well
I breathe fresh air
I don’t complain
About my shape, my race, my gender and size, I love it

It does not matter to me that I am not a model who appears on TV
As for my “rainbow” friends and I, we live, we love, we feel
We are happy!


Complete the following sentence by filling in the missing word from the poem.

The person in the poem has a beautiful body, because she / he exercises often and breathes _______ air.
Characteristics of Example 3

Learning outcome: LO 3: Reading and viewing

Assessment standard: Learner understands stories (told or read to learners):
• answers literal questions

Question type: Short answer

Grade level: Grade 6

Difficulty level: Medium

Cognitive category: Reasoning

Correct answer(s): fresh

Mark allocation: 2 marks

Scoring guide/key: 2 marks for correct spelling and correct use of language;
1 mark for a phonetically correct answer;
0 marks for the incorrect answer or no response

Example 3: Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response types</th>
<th>Mark allocation</th>
<th>Learners’ performance (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer correctly with the correct use of language</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer phonetically correct</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer totally incorrect</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fifty-one percent of the learners answered this question correctly and obtained a full mark of 2 whereas two percent had a partially correct answer gaining 1 mark. The remaining 47 percent answered the question incorrectly.

Let us now look at the learners’ responses.
Example 3: Learner responses

Correct response

Complete the following sentence by filling in the missing word from the poem.

The person in the poem has a beautiful body, because she / he exercises often and breathes fresh air.

Incorrect responses

Complete the following sentence by filling in the missing word from the poem.

The person in the poem has a beautiful body, because she / he exercises often and breathes proper and size air.

Complete the following sentence by filling in the missing word from the poem.

The person in the poem has a beautiful body, because she / he exercises often and breathes body of healthy air.

Complete the following sentence by filling in the missing word from the poem.

The person in the poem has a beautiful body, because she / he exercises often and breathes the klamuk air.

- In this question a large number of learners showed that they were unable to read the text for specific information.
Example 4: Use of dictionary

In this question learners were given a dictionary extract to use as a source of information.

**Study the following extract from the dictionary to answer the question.**

- **flame** *noun* (two *flames*)
  The bright part of something that is burning. The flame from a candle looks yellow. There were flames coming from the house that was burning.

- **flash** *noun* (two *flashes*)
  A bright light that appears suddenly for a very short time.

- **flesh** *noun* (no plural)
  The soft part of the bodies of people and animals between the skin and the bones. Another word for flesh is meat.

- **float** *verb* (floats, floating, floated)
  To stay on the surface of a liquid without sinking or in the air without falling.

- **flock** *noun*
  A group of animals of the same kind that feed and move around together, such as sheep or birds.

- **flood** *noun* (rhymes with *mud*)
  A lot of water covering land that is usually dry.

**Draw a circle around the correct letter to complete the sentence below.**

A piece of paper is ….. on the water in a dam.

A. swimming
B. floating
C. drowning
D. flying
Characteristics of Example 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning outcome:</th>
<th>LO 3: Reading and viewing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Assessment standard: | Learner uses reference books and develops vocabulary:  
• uses a dictionary |
| Question type: | Multiple choice |
| Grade level: | Grade 6 |
| Difficulty level: | Medium |
| Cognitive category: | Knowledge |
| Correct answer(s): | B |
| Mark allocation: | 1 mark |
| Scoring guide/key: | 1 mark for the correct option chosen;  
0 marks for the incorrect answer or no response |

Example 4: Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learners' performance (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. swimming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. floating Correct response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. drowning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. flying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirty-five percent of the learners chose the correct answer (B).  
This could mean that learners were not able to use a dictionary as a reference.  

Forty-six percent chose option A, swimming, which was not in the extract. They did not follow the instruction.
Tips for teaching

Working with poetry

In this section of the test, learners were expected to read for and apply information. The first example was based on a poem. It is important to expose the learners to reading skills in different formats, particularly the skill of reading and appreciating poetry. The poem in the test emphasises the need for a positive body image. This kind of poem helps the teacher integrate language with life skills. You should always be on the lookout for other poems you could collect to help integrate language with other learning areas.

Here is an example of a poem that is short enough to be written on the board.

If you meet a crocodile
Don't take a stick and poke it,
Pay no attention to its smile,
And never, never stroke it.
Because a waiting crocodile is always getting thinner,
So when you meet a crocodile it's ready for its dinner.

(Taken from New Bridge to English Learner's Book Grade 5, p.78, published by Kagiso Education, author unknown)

Draw the learners' attention to the use of rhyme in the poem through the use of words such as poke/stroke and thinner/dinner. You can get the learners to discuss why they think we don't speak like that every day. Does the use of rhyme help the reader to understand the poem? In pairs work together to say the poem; one speaks the other listens, then swap. Point out that the rhyme at the end of the line helps us to remember the words.

Short poems, like the example used in the test, can be written on the chalkboard if there are not enough textbooks to go around.
• You can look at the meaning of individual words such as ‘smile’. Do the learners know what a smile is? Can the learners tell you what is hiding behind the crocodile’s smile? Draw the learners’ attention to the fact that this is not a friendly smile but a threatening smile, one that tries to make us feel secure when we are really in danger!

• Get the learners to mime a friendly smile and a threatening smile.

Questions you could write on the board are:

• Why should you not tease a crocodile?
• If the crocodile is ready for its dinner, who do you think it might eat?
• There are two things that you should not do, one is you should not poke it with a stick, the other thing you should not do is: (put a cross in the box next to the correct answer)
  - eat it. □
  - stroke it. □
  - smile at it. □
  - meet it. □

• You can ask all of these questions and add some of your own. You will notice that the first question is open-ended while the last question is closed and requires the learner to recall the second line of the poem. The second question requires the learner to use his or her logic and come to the conclusion that he/she could become the crocodile’s dinner.

• You can also make posters with poems written on them and these can be stuck on the wall for the period of study. With poetry, the reader not only interprets the facts of the poem (reading for information) but also tries to understand what the poet is telling the audience through the poem (critical to aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts.)

• In the example given above an important lesson on the dangers of wildlife is learnt. Wild animals are not pets and should be treated with respect, not poked with sticks. You can link this poem to Natural Sciences. It lightens the mood of the study of the habits and habitats of crocodiles. It can also be linked to Life Skills, especially if your school is in a rural area and crocodiles are a real threat. Learners need to know what to look out for if they are collecting water, or swimming in the local river.
Dictionary skills

The second question was based on the use of a dictionary where the learners were supposed to look for the meaning of words and answer the question.

Ideally, in Grade 6 all learners should have dictionaries and be able to use them on their own. However, in situations where they are not available, there are still activities that can be done to develop dictionary and alphabetical ordering skills.

Here are some examples of activities that develop these skills:

- Group the learners (eg 6-10 per group). Get them to arrange their first names in alphabetical order. Then get them to arrange their surnames. To complete the activity you can then combine groups until the whole class has been arranged in alphabetical order.

- Teach learners to arrange by the second and third letters. Write a list of 4 or 5 words on the board. These can be from a theme that you are currently dealing with e.g. types of weather. Show them how, if the first letter is the same, we need to look at the second o, arrange the order and that if the second letter is the same, we need to look at the third. Ordering and searching by alphabetical order are very important life skills, and necessary across the curriculum, so it is worth spending time on this.

- Learners can draw up a list of shops in the area and arrange them in alphabetical order. An extension would be for the learners to collect the phone numbers of these shops and add them to their list, so creating a local telephone directory.

- Try to get hold of telephone directories; bring them into class. You can use them for alphabetical ordering skills practice.

- Try to get hold of telephone directories; bring them into class. You can use them for alphabetical ordering skills practice.
• Your spelling words for the week can be arranged in alphabetical order.

• You can liaise with teachers of other learning areas – e.g. At the end of a section in HSS you can ask the learners in a group to list all the new words they have learnt in alphabetical order. They can then write a simple definition for that word. E.g. in HSS learners look at famous people from the past. One of these is Galileo Galilei. Take some words the learners may have learnt and then re-arrange them in alphabetical order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professor</th>
<th>Astronomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telescope</td>
<td>Calculate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculate</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astronomy</td>
<td>Revolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolved</td>
<td>Telescope</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Schools can build up their collection of dictionaries and should aim at having at least one set per phase that could circulate amongst the classrooms so that all teachers can include dictionary work in their activities.

• From as early as Grade 1, learners should be encouraged to have note books which become their personal dictionaries (or My Word Book, in the Foundation Phase) where they record the meaning and correct spelling of words they find in their cross-curricular reading.

Developing reading comprehension with different texts

Try to collect magazines and newspapers for your classroom, as this will expose learners to other sorts of reading materials, not just formal books. This will show the learners that reading can also be fun and a leisure activity. If you do not know where to get hold of these ask your local newsagent what happens to unsold copies. Some publishers distribute these free to schools.
2.3 Assessment of writing skills

In these questions learners had to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes.

Example 5: Punctuation

Learners were expected to punctuate the sentence correctly and apply their writing skill.

---

Read the following passage carefully and answer the question.

MY GRANDMOTHER

Ploughing the mealie fields is what Granny Pauline enjoys most. We sometimes call her Gogo.

She wakes up early in the morning to go to the fields. She works there for the whole day. Gogo always tells us to make hay while the sun shines.

When Granny comes back in the evening, we rush out to meet her because we expect her basket to be filled with wild fruit and fresh mealies. We share everything amongst ourselves. Granny always tells us that mealies have carbohydrates that make us strong and that the wild fruit will give us vitamins to keep us healthy.

Rewrite the following sentence using the correct capital letters and punctuation.

ploughing the mealie fields is what granny pauline enjoys most
Let us now look at the learners' responses.

### Characteristics of Example 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning outcome:</th>
<th>LO 4: Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment standard:</td>
<td>Learner understands the writing process, and uses developing knowledge of language structure and use: • edits writing, using knowledge of structure (e.g. grammar, spelling, punctuation, grammatical differences between home and additional languages) and tools (e.g. dictionary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question type:</td>
<td>Extended response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade level:</td>
<td>Grade 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty level:</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive category:</td>
<td>Reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct answer(s):</td>
<td>Ploughing the mealie fields is what Granny Pauline enjoys most.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark allocation:</td>
<td>3 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoring guide/key:</td>
<td>3 marks for answer with correct punctuation and correct spelling; 2 marks for answer with correct punctuation, or correct spelling; 1 mark for a phonetically correct answer; 0 marks for the incorrect answer or no response</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Example 5: Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response types</th>
<th>Mark allocation</th>
<th>Learners' performance (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer correctly spelled with the correct use of language</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer correctly spell, or with the correct use of language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer phonetically correct</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer totally incorrect</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eleven percent of the learners obtained a full mark of 3. The majority of learners could not punctuate the sentence correctly. Some of the learners also rewrote the sentence incorrectly. The tendency to write words the way they are pronounced (i.e. phonetically) was observed in the way learners changed the spelling of words like ploughing (plouwing) and mealie (mielie).

Let us now look at the learners' responses.
Example 5: Learner responses

Correct response

Rewrite the following sentence using the correct capital letters and punctuation.
ploughing the maize fields is what granny pauline enjoys most

Ploughing the maize fields is what Granny Pauline enjoys most.

Incorrect responses

Rewrite the following sentence using the correct capital letters and punctuation.
ploughing the maize fields is what granny pauline enjoys most

Ploughing the maize fields is what Granny Pauline enjoys most of the time.

Rewrite the following sentence using the correct capital letters and punctuation.
ploughing the maize fields is what granny pauline enjoys most

Ploughing the maize fields is what Granny Pauline enjoys most of the time.

• The sentence, which was to be punctuated, was in the passage, so learners could have written it directly from text. In general, learners seemed not to follow given instructions.
Example 6: Summarising text

This question expected learners to describe, in one sentence, what Peter and Sello were talking about in their dialogue.

BEGGING

Peter: “Look at that man begging on the street corner. Isn’t it a pity that we have people among us who have to beg?”

Sello: “He is begging for money to buy food for himself and his family. Maybe he is tired and weak from hunger.”

Peter: “Look at his torn shoes, and his shirt has holes too.”

Sello: “I am sure he is cold and hungry. The wind is blowing, it is cold and he is not even wearing a jacket. He looks ill. Let’s go to him and offer him our movie money and our potato chips. He will accept anything because beggars cannot be choosers.”

Peter: “Alright. It is good to help others, because one never knows where one might end up tomorrow.”

Sello: “Look! He has fallen down and he is very pale. I am worried. Let’s help him.”

Write one (1) sentence to describe what Peter and Sello were talking about.
Characteristics of Example 6

Learning outcome: LO 4: Writing
Assessment standard: Learner writes to communicate information:
• writes a recount of events
Question type: Extended response
Grade level: Grade 6
Difficulty level: High
Cognitive category: Knowledge and comprehension
Correct answer(s): Peter and Sello were talking about a beggar.
Mark allocation: 3 marks
Scoring guide/key: 3 marks for answer with correct punctuation and correct spelling;
2 marks for answer with correct punctuation, or correct spelling;
1 mark for a phonetically correct answer;
0 marks for the incorrect answer or no response

Example 6: Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response types</th>
<th>Mark allocation</th>
<th>Learners’ performance (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer correctly spelt with the correct use of language</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer correctly spelt, or with the correct use of language</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer phonetically correct</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer totally incorrect</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sixty four percent of the learners could not summarise the text correctly.

Let us now look at the learners’ responses.
Example 6: Learner responses

Correct responses

Write one (1) sentence to describe what Peter and Sello were talking about.
They were talking about people who beg on the street and people who don't have money.

Write one (1) sentence to describe what Peter and Sello were talking about.
Peter and Sello were talking about a man at the side of the road begging.

Incorrect responses

Write one (1) sentence to describe what Peter and Sello were talking about.
The wind is brisk and cold.

Write one (1) sentence to describe what Peter and Sello were talking about.
The himself is Peter.

• Dialogues can help learners develop skills that may not be learnt from other types of text. Learners would benefit from frequent use of these texts.
Example 7: Sentence construction

Learners had to interpret a picture and construct a meaningful sentence guided by the word 'nurse'.

Look at the picture below and write one (1) sentence on what is happening in the picture.

**Picture**  
**Sentence**

---

My notes

---
Example 7: Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response types</th>
<th>Mark allocation</th>
<th>Learners' performance (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer correctly spelt with the correct use of language</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer correctly spelt, or with the correct use of language</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer phonetically correct</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer totally incorrect</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirteen percent of the learners answered the question correctly and obtained a full mark of 3. For the rest of the learners, the answers were either completely incorrect or were spelt incorrectly.

Let us now look at the learners' responses.
Example 7: Learner responses

Correct responses

- The nurse is checking the sick man's drip.

Incorrect responses

- The nurse is sick.

• Again in this case it can be seen that learners were not able to write meaningful sentences.
Tips for teaching

Punctuation

To assist learners with punctuation:

- Write unpunctuated sentences on a board.
- Read the sentence aloud to the class.
- Ask learners to punctuate the sentences correctly in their books.
- Read the sentences again when they have been punctuated correctly.

This will help the learners see how punctuation can change the meaning of a sentence.

An example of a sentence for punctuation: *stop thief shouted thabo*

In the first punctuated sentence Thabo is ordering the thief to stop.

In the second, he is alerting people to the fact that there is a thief around.

Writing a description

- To help learners construct sentences, pictures cut from magazines can be stuck on a board with a clue word written underneath each. The learners then write a sentence in their notebooks describing each picture.

Here is another similar activity that you can try:

- Learners, in their groups, cut six different pictures from magazines.
- They then discuss in their groups how to link the pictures into a sequential story.
- Each learner then writes his/her own story for the pictures.
- Learners read each other’s stories and suggest improvements.
- Learners create final drafts of their stories and present them to the whole class.

The best way to improve writing skills is to WRITE!! Learners should do some kind of writing activity DAILY. At least one item of homework per week should be extended written work.
2.4 Assessing thinking and reasoning skills

Learners have to use language to think and reason, as well as to access, process and use information for learning. In this question learners were assessed on their ability to transfer information from a given context to a new one.

Example 8: Invitation card

Learners were asked to read the information on the card and extend its use to a similar situation.

*Read the information on the birthday invitation.*

A BIRTHDAY INVITATION

---

12 YEARS OLD

Please come to my

BIRTHDAY PARTY

Place: The Khumalo home
Where: 27 Robin Hood Street
(next to Steers Restaurant)
When: Saturday, 9 December
Time: 15:00–18:00
From: Buyiswa

Please bring your swimming costume

Mention anything you think would make a party interesting besides *swimming*.

---
Learning outcome: LO 5: Thinking and reasoning
Assessment standard: • Learner uses language for thinking
Question type: Open-ended (short answer)
Grade level: Grade 6
Difficulty level: High
Cognitive category: Concepts
Correct answer(s): Dancing and jiving / singing / jumping castle / water sliding / playing music and games [Any relevant answer]

Correct answer(s):

Mark allocation: 2 marks

Scoring guide/key: 2 marks for answer correctly spelt; 1 mark for a phonetically correct answer; 0 marks for the incorrect answer or no response

Characteristics of Example 8

Let us now look at the learners’ responses.

Example 8: Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response types</th>
<th>Mark allocation</th>
<th>Learners’ performance (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer correctly spelt with the correct use of language</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer phonetically correct</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer totally incorrect</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sixteen percent of the learners answered the question correctly and obtained a full mark of 2.

Let us now look at the learners’ responses.
Example 8: Learner responses

Correct responses

Mention anything you think would make a party interesting besides swimming.
A jumping castle

Mention anything you think would make a party interesting besides swimming.
Playing games, a treasure hunt.

Incorrect responses

Mention anything you think would make a party interesting besides swimming.
Please bring you swimming

Mention anything you think would make a party interesting besides swimming.
Birthday party, as besides going to sea

Mention anything you think would make a party interesting besides swimming.
That they must bring there
Swimming costume

- A great majority of the learners gave incorrect answers.
- They were not able to extract information from the card and generate own ideas.
Example 9: Using information from a map

Learners were assessed on their ability to use non-textual information, namely a map.

*Read the question below and circle the letter of the correct answer.*

**Use the map to answer the question. Read the question below and circle the letter of the correct answer.**

**Draw a circle around the correct letter of the incorrect answer.**

Which tool will not help you to find direction?

A. Map  
B. Compass  
C. Thermometer  
D. Sign post
### Characteristics of Example 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning outcome:</th>
<th>LO 5: Thinking and reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Assessment standard: | Learner uses language across the curriculum:  
  - uses language for thinking – identifies similarities and differences between things |
| Question type: | Multiple choice |
| Grade level: | Grade 6 |
| Difficulty level: | Medium |
| Cognitive category: | Knowledge |
| Correct answer(s): | C |
| Mark allocation: | 1 mark |
| Scoring guide/key: | 1 mark for the correct option chosen; 0 marks for the incorrect answer or no response |

### Example 9: Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>% of learners per option</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Map</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Compass</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Thermometer (Correct response)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Sign post</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty-eight percent of the learners chose the correct option, C. The majority went for the correct answer when they were instructed to choose the incorrect answer. Reading and following instructions is an important skill that learners need to practise.
Tips for teaching

Preparing learners for different question types

Learners need to be prepared to answer different types of questions as part of class activities. For instance:

- Read the questions through before learners begin the activity and make sure they understand what each question requires especially where they might be asked to interpret the text or do something different.
- Ask learners to tell you what they think they have to do before they start and correct any misunderstandings.
- When an assessment activity is being done, remind learners to READ the questions VERY CAREFULLY and look out for anything that could be different.
- When you have marked the assessment, go over the work with the class, pointing out where questions were read incorrectly.
- Encourage learners to reflect particularly on what they did incorrectly so that they can ensure that they don’t make the same mistakes again.

Understanding and writing different types of text

Learners should be exposed to reading and writing activities on a frequent basis.

- Try to bring into your teaching different kinds of texts for reading, like notices, invitation cards, greetings cards and timetables.
- If you don’t have enough copies to hand out to the learners, write the text on the board.
- Teach any vocabulary that the learners do not know.
- Write some questions (include different question types, including multiple choice) about the different texts on the board.
- Try to find free copies of leaflets that you can bring in and hand out to each child then write some comprehension questions on the board.
- As an extension exercise, get learners to develop their own cards, notices and/or timetables.
Using information from maps

Learners often find maps difficult to read and understand. This is an important life skill so do spend some time on it.

• Get learners to draw a map of their route to and from school.
• As phase teachers, prepare your own map or plan of the school.
• Draw this map on a board without any rooms or items labelled.
• Let the learners copy the map into their notebooks.
• Tell the learners to mark on the map various items (e.g. principal’s office, our classroom, the water tap, etc.).
• You could even hide a note somewhere in the school, mark the map with an X where it is hidden and get the learners to find the note.
2.5 Assessing learners' use of language structure

Learners were assessed on their ability to use correct prepositions. The exercise was based on the passage “My Grandmother” and learners had to select correct prepositions to complete sentences taken directly from the text.

Example 10: Use of language structures

Read the following passage carefully and answer the question.

MY GRANDMOTHER

Ploughing the mealie fields is what Granny Pauline enjoys most. We sometimes call her Gogo.

She wakes up early in the morning to go to the fields. She works there for the whole day. Gogo always tells us to make hay while the sun shines.

When Granny comes back in the evening, we rush out to meet her because we expect her basket to be filled with wild fruit and fresh mealies. We share everything amongst ourselves. Granny always tells us that mealies have carbohydrates that make us strong and that the wild fruit will give us vitamins to keep us healthy.

Draw a circle around the letter of the correct preposition for the following sentence.

She works there … the whole day.

A. into
B. to
C. for
D. up
Characteristics of Example 10

Learning outcome: LO 6: Language structure and use

Assessment standard: Learner uses language forms and structures to communicate orally and in writing:
• uses some language to talk about language (meta-language)

Question type: Multiple choice

Grade level: Grade 7

Difficulty level: Medium

Cognitive category: Knowledge

Correct answer(s): C

Mark allocation: 1 mark

Scoring guide/key: 1 mark for the correct option chosen; 0 marks for the incorrect answer or no response

Example 10: Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of learners per option</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. into</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. to</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. for (Correct response)</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. up</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 46 percent of the learners were able to use correct prepositions to complete the given exercise.
Tips for teaching

Integrating grammar and vocabulary into teaching

According to the NCS, grammar and vocabulary are the building blocks of language. As such they should be taught in context and integrated with reading, writing, listening and speaking.

- Language structure exercises can also be incorporated across the curriculum.

- Prepositions can be taught in Natural Sciences e.g. *The bee is on the petal; The seed is in the ground.*

- Tenses can be taught in the Human and Social Sciences (HSS). e.g. *South Africa has a democratic constitution; The San people in the Cape had not seen ships before.*

- Vocabulary can be developed by reading the main stories from a newspaper on a daily basis, or by reading texts from other learning areas.

- When difficult words are encountered, these can be written on the board and then entered in the learners’ personal wordbooks. At the end of each week you can see how many new words your class has learnt.

Learning vocabulary from context

Learners should also be taught skills for working out meanings of words from the given context in the absence of a dictionary. For instance:

“Rooibos tea comes from an *indigenous* bush, which grows in the Cederberg area of the Western Cape.”

- If learners do not know the meaning of *indigenous*, they will be able to work out that it is something that grows in South Africa through reading the whole sentence.

- In this way the context of the sentence can provide information about the meaning of an unfamiliar word. It is important to encourage learners not to give up when they come across words they do not understand when reading their textbooks, but to read the entire sentence, and sometimes the following sentence, to get the meaning of the unfamiliar word/s.
3. THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

The main findings of the survey, which relate to learner performance in the Language test, are reported in this section.

3.1 Overall distribution of learner scores

The overall distribution of the percentage scores obtained by the learners in the Language test (Listening Comprehension and Reading and Writing) is presented in Figure 1.

As has been shown in Figure 1, the distribution of learner percentage scores ranged widely from two to well over 90 percent. The distribution was skewed heavily towards the lower scores, with a high concentration of learners obtaining scores between two and 45 percent. Although the average score for the whole test was 38 percent, the score obtained by most learners was 13 percent, obtained by 24 percent of the learners.

3.2 Performance according to levels of achievement

As a further aid to making sense of the spread in learners’ performance in the test, performance was summarised according to the rubric in Table 1. The rubric uses the labels: “Not achieved”, “Partly achieved”, “Achieved” and “Outstanding” and the indicated cut-off percentages to categorise learners’ performance in terms of the overall percentage scores they obtained in the test.

The percentage of learners who achieved the various levels of performance in the test overall is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Learner performance by achievement level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement level</th>
<th>Level description</th>
<th>Range of scores for each level</th>
<th>Percentage of learners at each level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not achieved</td>
<td>1% – 39%</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Partly achieved</td>
<td>40% – 49%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
<td>50% – 69%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>70% – 100%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 1 it can be seen that 63 percent of the learners were at the “Not achieved” level; nine percent of the learners were at the “Partly achieved” level; while 14 percent were at the “Achieved” level. At the upper end of the levels were 14 percent of the learners who attained the “Outstanding” level. This last category (14 percent) consisted of learners who could confidently be said to be ready for the next grade.
3.3 Performance by Learning Outcome

The questions in the test were intended to cover five of the six learning outcomes (LOs) in Language. Learner performance by learning outcome is presented in average percentage scores in Figure 2.

From Figure 2 it can be observed that learners obtained the highest average score in LO 1 (Listening). The key competencies associated with LO 1 require the learner to listen for information and enjoyment, and respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations. The average score for LO 1 was 37 percent, followed by LO 4 (Writing) with an average of 30 percent.

In LO 4 learners should be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes. In LO 5 (Thinking and Reasoning), scored at 26 percent, learners are expected to use language to think and reason, as well as to access, process and use information for learning.

Figure 2: Performance by Learning Outcomes for Listening Comprehension

For Reading and Writing the overall learner scores by learning outcome have been shown in Figure 3.

From Figure 3 it can be observed that learners obtained the highest average score in LO 3 (Reading and Viewing). The key competencies associated with LO 3 include the ability to read and view information for enjoyment, and respond critically to aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in a given text. The average score for LO 3 was 51 percent. The learners who scored around the average of 51 percent showed satisfactory ability to read textual and pictorial information with understanding.

The next best average scores were for LO 5, which is about thinking and reasoning, with an average of 35 percent and LO 6, which is about language structure and use, with an average of about 34 percent. LO 6 refers to the use the sounds, words and grammar of the language to create and interpret texts.

The lowest average percentage of 31 percent was in LO 4 (Writing). This might indicate a need for more writing activities to be conducted in the classroom, especially with regard to interpretation of text and the ability to summarise what has either been heard or read.
Tips for teaching

Ensuring a balance of language activities

Attention is needed to ensure that you offer a balance of activities between listening, speaking, reading and writing. The NCS overview document does detail the time allocations for each Learning Area. It is important to ensure that the timetable allows for these allocations.

Questioning techniques

Learner difficulty with open-ended questions is best tackled by exposing them to more activities where they have to think, analyse and evaluate. Frequent use of higher order skills is recommended.

Questioning techniques are an important area for development of learners’ language and thinking skills. Try to ask questions that encourage learners to think, discuss, analyse etc.

Examples of questions that get learners to think critically:

- Why do you think the invitation card says, *please bring your swimming costume*?
- What do you think the children will be doing at the party?
- Boys and girls usually like to play different games. What sort of games do you think that children will play at this party?
- If you were at Buyiswa’s party, what would you like to do? What would you like to eat? What could make Buyiswa’s party more exciting?

This could be followed by an activity such as:

- You are to plan a birthday party for the next person in your group who is to have a birthday. How will you make this a fun party that everyone will enjoy?

Remember: ‘Why’ and ‘How’ questions are usually far more challenging than ‘What’ and ‘When’ questions.

- Try to get into the habit of asking a ‘Why’ or a ‘How’ question at the end of each lesson. Learners then have to go away and think and discuss and come back to the next lesson with possible answers.
3.4 Performance by question type

The average percentages for multiple-choice (MCQ) and open-ended response questions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Learner performance by question type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question type</th>
<th>Average percentage score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended response</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average score for the multiple-choice questions was 49 percent, significantly higher than the average of 31 percent for the open-ended response questions. Limitations in vocabulary and language usage that were observed may explain this observation.

3.5 Performance by gender

In Figure 4, a bar diagram has been used to represent the performance of boys and girls in average percentage scores.

There was a six percent difference between the average scores of boys and girls as shown in Figure 4.

- Magazines are a good source of varied texts for both genders; articles on animals, sports or cars can be made available to boys and to girls. When choosing classroom readers there should be a balance between fiction and non-fiction books selected.

3.6 Performance by LOLT

In Figure 5 and Figure 6 the average scores of learners by language of learning and teaching (as opposed to mother tongue) have been shown. Figure 5 refers to scores in the Listening Comprehension and Figure 6 to Reading and Writing.
From both Figure 5 and Figure 6 it is clear that the language of instruction, as opposed to the learner’s mother tongue, has a great influence on performance.

If you translate everything into the home language or code switch in every sentence, the learners will “switch off” their listening to the FAL and only “tune in” when you are speaking home language (HL).

So, how do you explain a concept or word that is difficult?
- Firstly, try to demonstrate the word or concept by either showing a picture, or demonstrating an action, or encouraging learners to derive the meaning from the context.
- If this is not possible or successful, say the word(s) in the FAL, then clearly say it (them) in the HL, then repeat in the FAL
- In the FAL class, you should try to limit the times that you do this so that you are maximising learners’ exposure to fluent oral text and so developing their listening comprehension skills.
- At the end of the lesson or learning activity, you can reinforce the learning of new words or concepts by getting the learners to write down the word(s) in their personal dictionaries.

3.7 Performance by location of school

The average percentage scores by location of school have been presented in Figure 7.

If you translate everything into the home language or code switch in every sentence, the learners will “switch off” their listening to the FAL and only “tune in” when you are speaking home language (HL).

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- At the end of the lesson or learning activity, you can reinforce the learning of new words or concepts by getting the learners to write down the word(s) in their personal dictionaries.
As shown in Figure 7, the general trend indicates that learners’ average scores varied according to location of school and in favour of urban schools. Average scores ranged from a high of 63 percent for urban schools, through 40 percent for township schools, 33 percent for farm schools, 29 percent for rural schools and levelled off at 23 percent for remote rural schools.

4. CONCLUSION

Learner levels of performance in Language in the Intermediate Phase vary widely across the top end and a large number at the lower end of the performance scale. Areas for development were identified in basic skills. These include inadequate reading and writing skills in the language of learning and teaching (LOLT), for example, not being able to do the following: extract information from written text, construct simple sentences, and spell words correctly. This may limit the extent to which learners access information and communicate their opinions.

The “Tips for teaching” offered are only guides to add to other innovative ideas that teachers already use to assist learners to learn effectively.