EGRS

EARLY GRADE READING STUDY

Re aga motheo

Testing for evaluation in African Languages:
17 August 2017
Nompumelelo Mohohlwane

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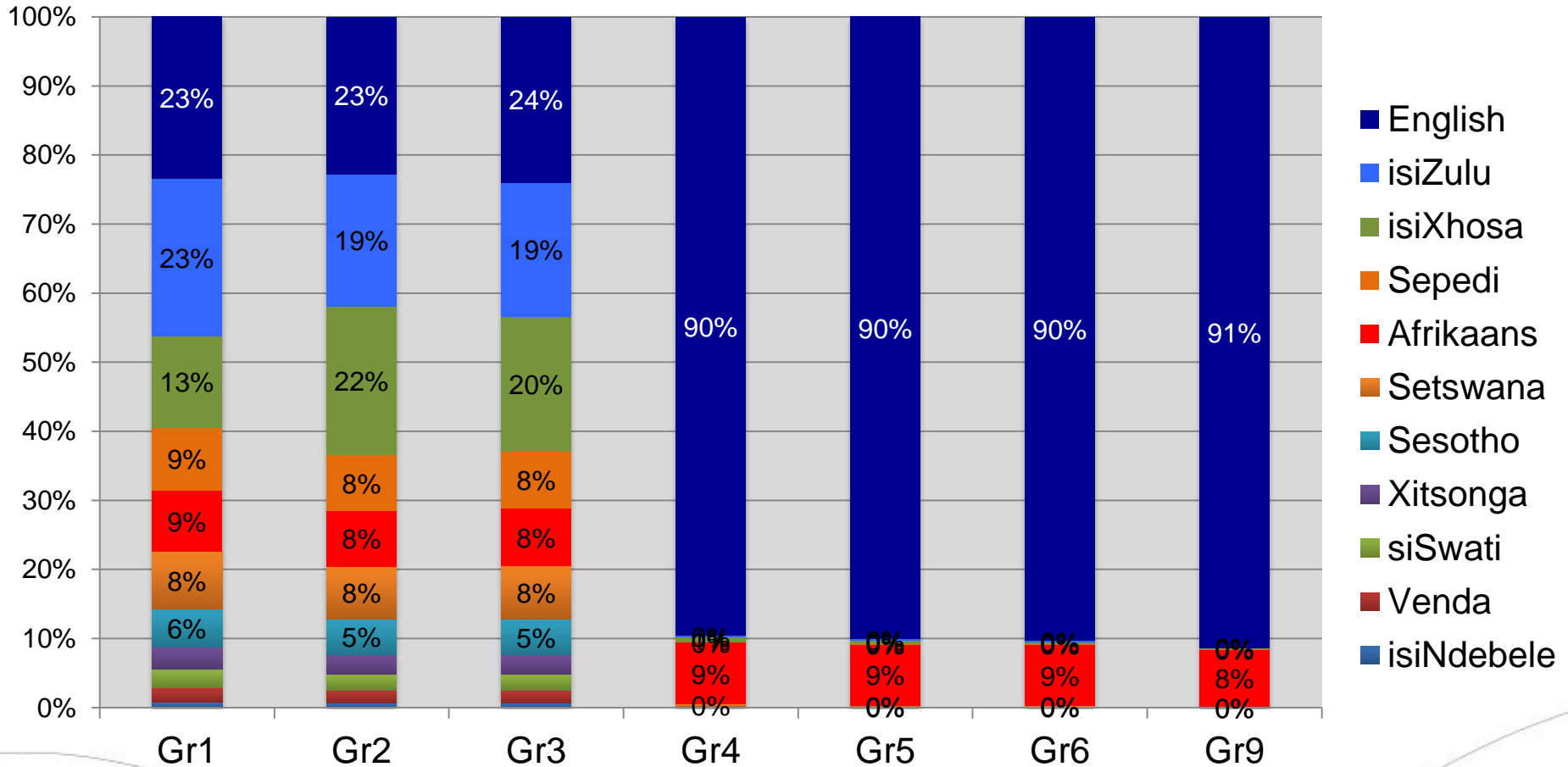REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Outline

- **Part 1:What does schooling in SA look like?**
  – Background of education status
  – Language in South Africa
  – Literature and research on reading in SA

- **Part 2: Assessing reading**
  – Why does assessing reading matter?
  – Status of assessment in classroom
  – Assessing components of reading

- **Part 3: Evaluating reading at scale**
  – Importance of evaluating reading at scale
  – Measurement examples
  – Recommendations

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Background

- Improved access over the past decade in East and Southern Africa:

    - **97%+** of 7-15 year old learners
    - **Increase from 39% to 58%** of learners getting Matric (1995-2015)
    - **Increase from 60 000 to 120 000** Matric Bachelor passes since 2008

- **BUT poor learner attainment : l**ow performance in Maths, Science and Languages

- New benchmark for reading levels in Grade 4 Pre-PIRLS 2011
    - **29%** of Grade 4 learners did not have the rudimentary reading skills for Grade 2 level
    - **More than 50%** of learners tested in Sepedi and Tshivenda are at risk
    - **57% of Sepedi** children did not meet the lowest international benchmark

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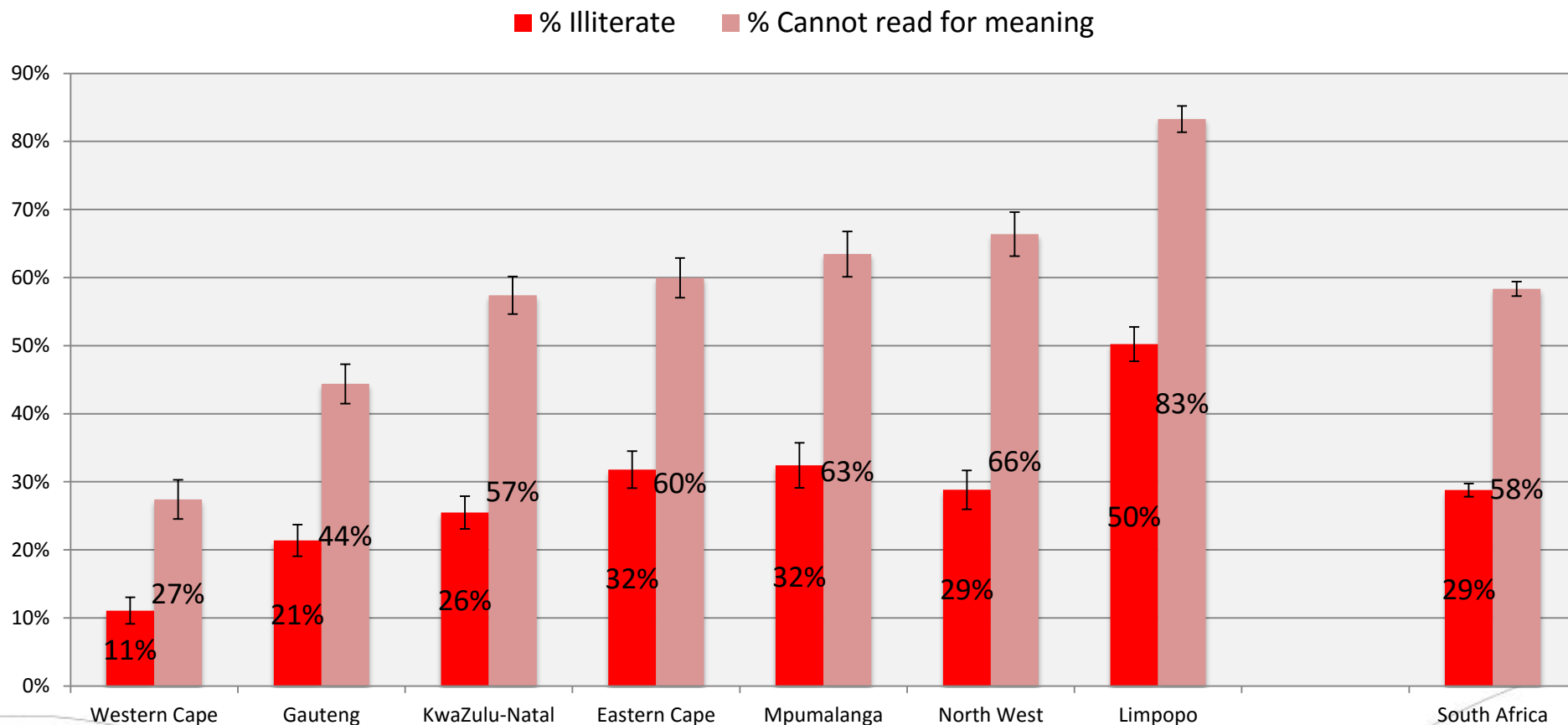
Complex language dynamics in SA
ANA 2013 Language of Assessment

Can children read in African languages?

PrePIRLS 2011 - Proportion of Grade 4 students that are <u>illiterate</u> and the proportion who <u>cannot read for meaning</u> (in LOLT Gr1-3)
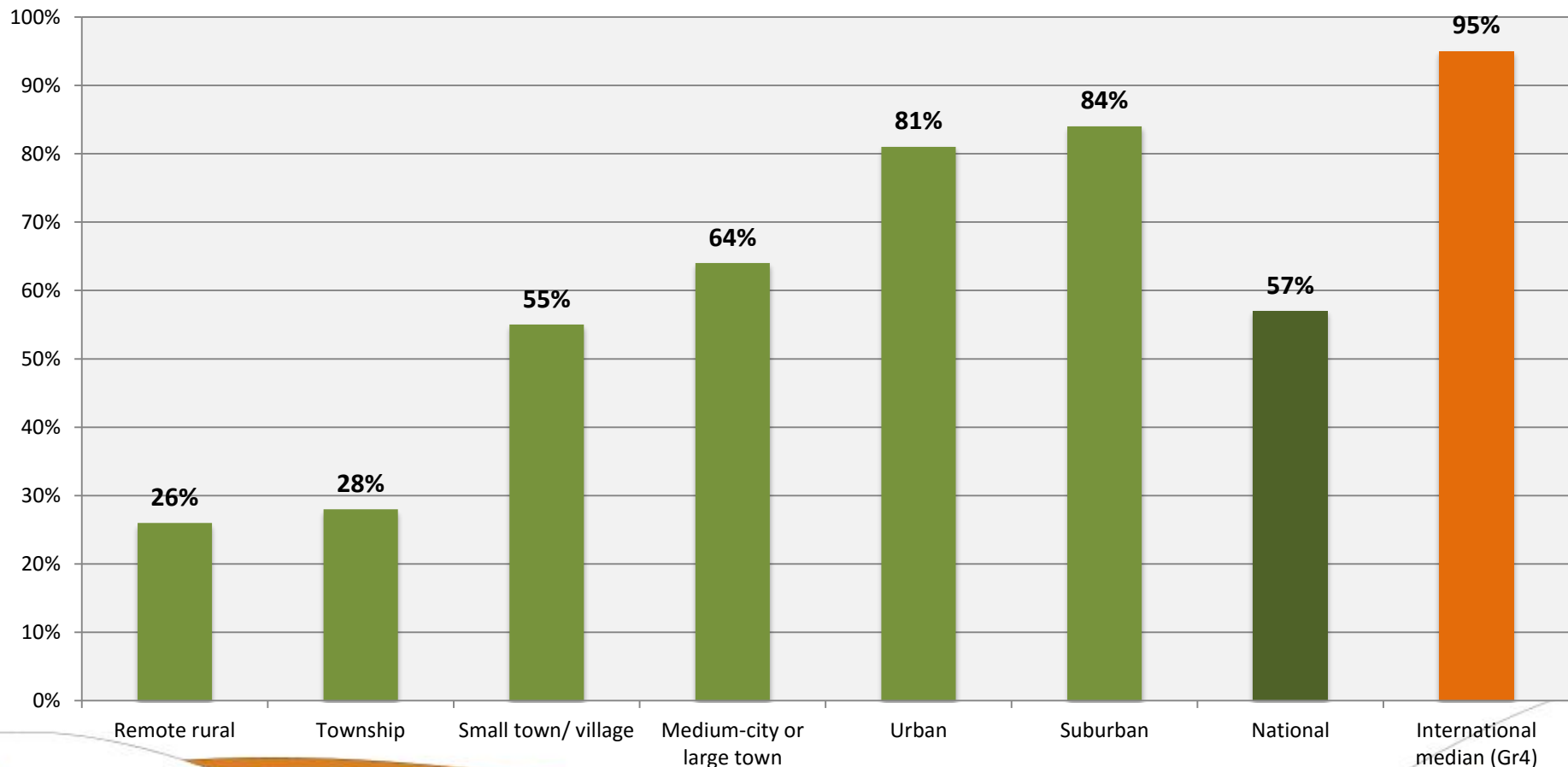*Using prePIRLS 2011 illiterate: cannot reach low benchmark. Read for meaning: reach intermediate benchmark. Note: prePIRLS not*

■ % Illiterate   ■ % Cannot read for meaning

	Western Cape	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Eastern Cape	Mpumalanga	North West	Limpopo	South Africa
% Illiterate	11%	21%	26%	32%	32%	29%	50%	29%
% Cannot read for meaning	27%	44%	57%	60%	63%	66%	83%	58%

Do children in English or Afrikaans LOLT schools learn to read?

PIRLS 2011 - Proportion of Gr5 students in English & Afrikaans schools acquiring <u>basic reading skills</u> by school location

Note: Proportion reaching low international benchmark in PIRLS 2011. SA tested 3515 grade 5 students in 92 schools where Eng/Afr was LO

Location	Percentage
Remote rural	26%
Township	28%
Small town/ village	55%
Medium-city or large town	64%
Urban	81%
Suburban	84%
National	57%
International median (Gr4)	95%

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Language Inequality in SA

- Only **58% of Africans** reported being able to read and write in Home Language. This is **95% for Whites**

- Direct relationship between English proficiency and earning in SA
  - Study showed men reading and writing in English earn 55% more
  - Those with English proficiency & post-schooling qualification earn 97% more

- Apartheid-era policies - inequalities can be seen along a number of correlated dimensions, including
  - Language,
  - Geographical location,
  - Socioeconomic status,
  - Race
  - Former department

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Language Inequality in SA

- International literature: Benefit of initial learning in Home Lang

- Taylor and von Fintel (2016)
  - learners with home language instruction in the Foundation Phase performed better in English in Grade 4, 5 and 6.

- Spaull (2016)
  - Learners tested in both HL & then English in Grade 3
  - Average for HL test was 33%, worse in English

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# Why does assessing reading matter?

- Specific ways to assess reading – important for classroom practice
- Schreiner (2003) suggests that automaticity in cognitive function frees up 90% of working memory for higher-order skills

- NCS (CAPS) requires assessment but:
  - Lack of reading & writing opportunities in class
  - Chorusing rather than individual reading
  - Weak assessment of reading
  - Little systematic instruction of phonics
  - The lack of reading homework
  - Minimal reading of extended texts in the early grades
  - Low expectations about reading

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Components of reading

- **Phonemic awareness:** *Being able to hear, identify and manipulate individual phonemes (sounds) in spoken words and understand that spoken words and syllables are made up of speech sounds.*
- **Alphabetic principle:** *Understanding that words are made up of letters that represent segments of speech; understanding the systematic relationships between letters and phonemes (sounds).*
- **Vocabulary:** *Word knowledge, word instruction and word learning strategies and usage.*
- **Comprehension:** *Being able to construct meaning from written text.*
- **Fluency:** *Being able to read connected text quickly, accurately and with meaningful expression (prosody).*

FIGURE 3: Factors influencing early reading acquisition
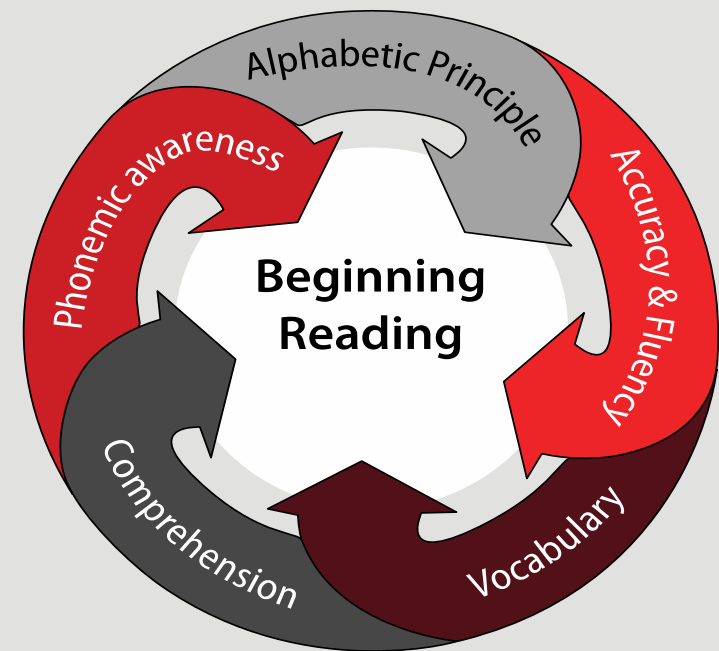
Measurement of Reading in African languages

- Curriculum provides requirements for assessing but no specific standardised tool

- EGRA – most widely used tool
  - Letter sound recognition
  - Word recognition
  - Non-word recognition
  - Oral Reading Fluency & comprehension

- Significance of standardizing learner assessments
  - classroom
  - At scale

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Measurement of Reading in African languages

- Benchmarks for reading in English are known – based on evidence
  - Learners at the 50th percentile should read 107 words correct a minute (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006)
- But these do not exist for African language
  - Insufficient understanding of African lang typology
  - Gaps in current tools to measure reading in African languages

EXAMPLE

- English has a complex vowel system
- African languages only have 5-7 vowels
- English has **21 single consonants & 6 digraphs,**
- African languages have a combination of single consonants, and many digraphs, trigraphs and 4-5 letter phonemes.
- **E.g** hl, tl, ty, mb, nk, ndl,hlw, tsh, kgw), ntlh, ntšhw, mpfh

Measurement of Reading in African languages

Language	Text
English	There was a stranger who was very hungry. He came to a village and asked for food. Nobody had any food.
N Sotho	Ka le lengwe la matšatši mosepedi yo a bego a na le tlala. O fihlile motseng wo mongwe a kgopela dijo. Go be go se na yo a bego a na le dijo.
Xitsonga	Siku rin'wana mufambi loyi a ri na ndlala. U fikile emugangeni. A kombela swakudya, kambe a ku nga ri na loyi.
isiZulu	Kunesihambi esasilambile kakhulu. Sahamba sicela ukudla emizini yabantu. Abantu abengenakho ukudla.

	Words in Sentence1	Words in Sentence2	Words in Sentence3	Total words	Words per sentence	Letters per word	Total single syllable words: V/ CV
N Sotho	13	8	12	33	11	3.2	19
Tsonga	8	3	10	21	7	4	9
Zulu	3	5	3	11	3.6	8	0

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Conclusion & Recommendation

- Recognition that learner performance is poor in both Home Language & English

- Need to target quality of teaching in both Home Language & English – reading specific

- Need for empirical language-specific norms and benchmarks for indigenous African languages

- Reading in African languages is under-researched and under-theorised
  – Need for dedicated academic attention to theory & tools for measurement

Thank you