What are reading benchmarks and why do we need them?

Reading Benchmarks For African Languages

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Presentation overview

1. How is reading in the primary schooling?

2. What are reading benchmarks?

3. Why do we need reading benchmarks for African languages?
What do we know about reading comprehension in SA?

78% of South African Gr4 learners cannot read for meaning in any language.

What do we know about reading comprehension in SA?
Why do we need benchmarks for African languages?

- International and regional assessments allows reflection and comparison to other education systems

- Provide a dipstick on the goal of literacy – comprehension “iceberg”

- BUT not clear what lies beneath – which parts of reading are not successful
What are reading benchmarks?

A benchmark is a standard or point of reference against which things may be compared or assessed.

Benchmark acceptable “remedial action” in a system:
• Not more than 1 repetition per phase

Benchmark acceptable practice in management:
• Auditor General assesses for a 95% achievement of set performance

Benchmark skills (e.g., reading) to evaluate student progress:
• Minimum reading levels in PIRLS
What are reading benchmarks?

- vocabulary
- listening comprehension
- phonology
- morphology
- syntax (grammar)
- discourse
Why do we need benchmarks for African languages?

- 400 variants across a third of Africa
- Spoken by 250 million people
- SA classification by Doke

Southern Bantu language family in South Africa

Nguni language family (Conjunctive orthography)
- isiZulu
- isiXhosa
- Siswati
- isiNdebele

Sotho language family (disjunctive orthography)
- Sesotho
- Sepedi
- Setswana

Non-clustered languages (Mainly disjunctive orthography)
- Tshivenda
- Xitsonga

Khoi and San languages
- 11 linguistically distinct variant

Bantu- Bleek 1850 “a frequently occurring plural form of the word meaning person”
Why do we need benchmarks for African languages?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sepedi</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xitsonga</td>
<td>Siku rin’wana mufambi loyi a ri na ndlala. U fikile emugangeni. A kombela swakudya, kambe a ku nga ri na loyi.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gloss</td>
<td>There was a stranger who was very hungry. He came to a village and asked for food. Nobody had any food.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Words in Sentence1</th>
<th>Words in Sentence2</th>
<th>Words in Sentence3</th>
<th>Total words</th>
<th>Words per sentence</th>
<th>Letters per word</th>
<th>Total single syllable words: V/ CV</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>3.2</td>
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Why do we need benchmarks for African languages?

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<tr>
<th>OONDONYE single consonants</th>
<th>OONDONMBINI double consonants (digraphs)</th>
<th>OONDONMBINI double consonants (blends)</th>
<th>OONDONTHU triple consonants (trigraphs)</th>
<th>OONDONTHU triple consonants (blends)</th>
<th>OONDONE four consonants</th>
<th>OONDONTLANU five consonants</th>
<th>IZANDI ZEMBOLEKO borrowed sounds</th>
<th>IZANDI EZIDITYANISIWEYO blended sounds preceded by ‘m’</th>
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Conclusion

1. Continuing to measure “compare” regionally and internationally is important
   • PIRLS and SEACMEQ

2. Moving to understanding the underlying reading skills and expectations
   • Earlier grades often not assessed
   • Earlier skills that precede comprehension
   • prior to regional and international assessment

3. Language distinctions require different benchmarks
   • Orthographic differences - language families categorisation
   • Morphological differences - explicit understanding