

What are reading benchmarks and why do we need them?

Reading Benchmarks For African Languages

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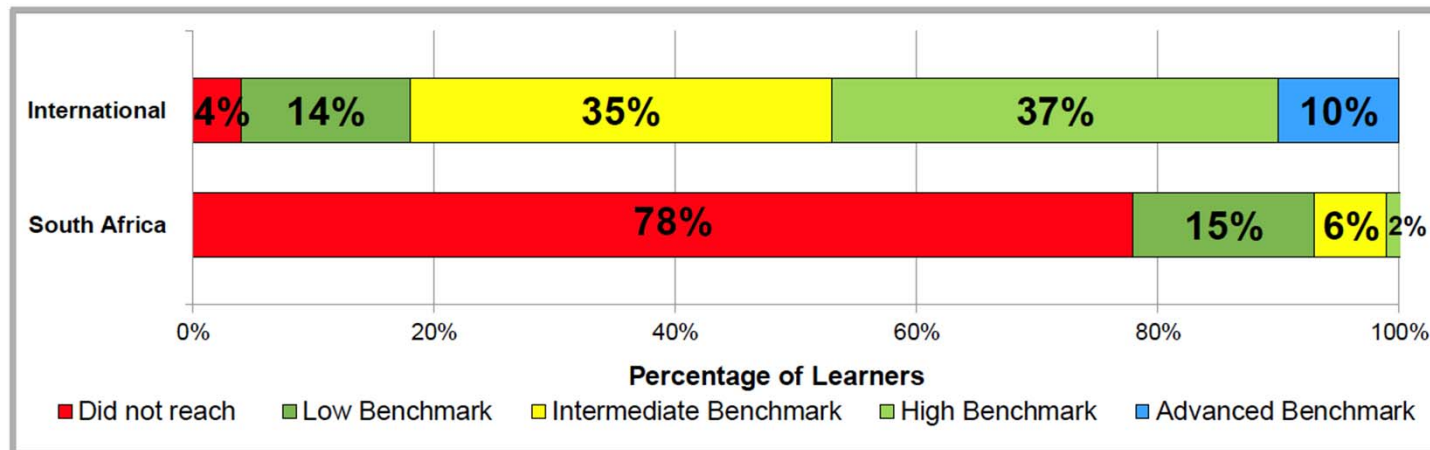
Presentation overview

- 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?

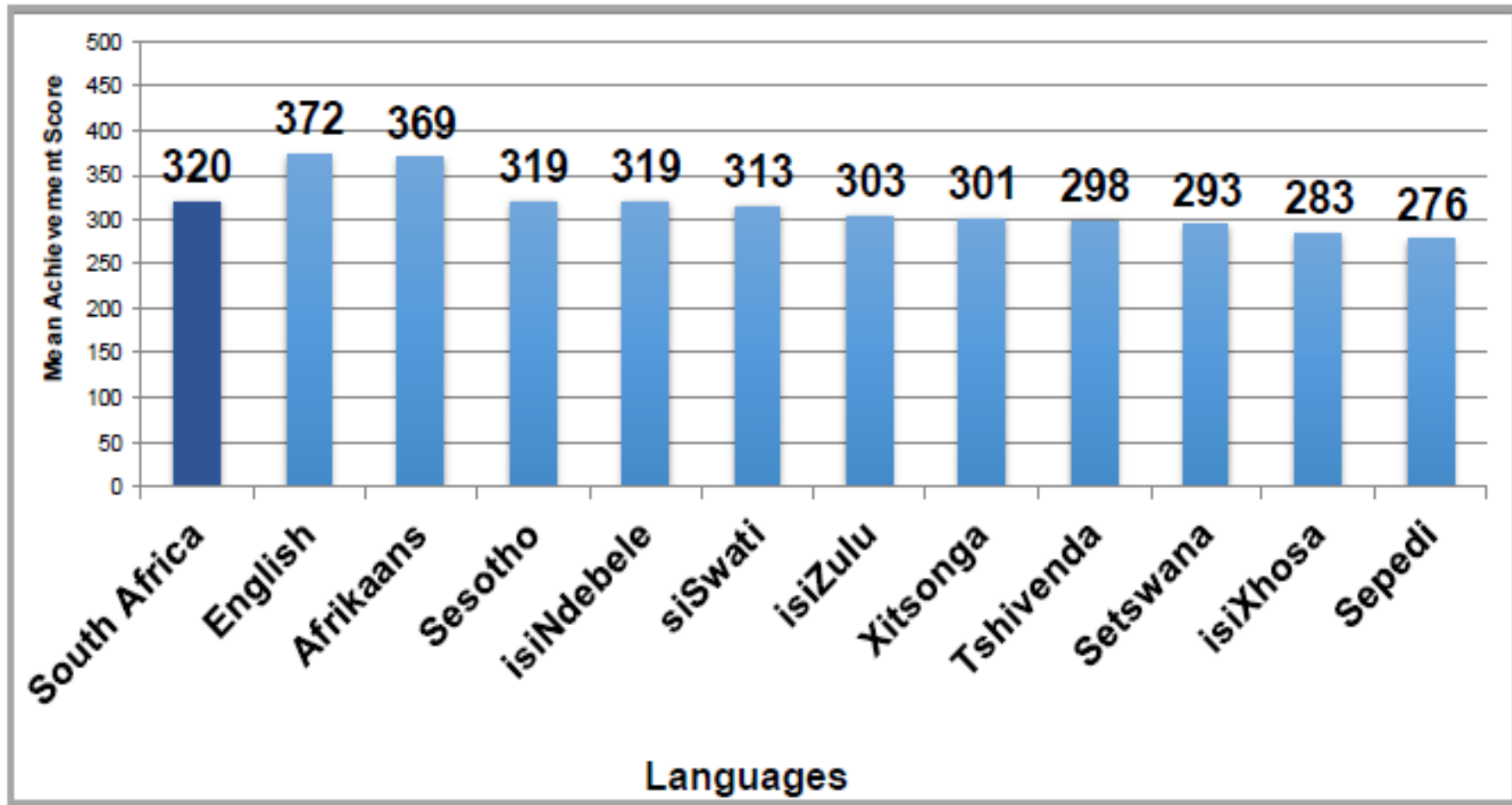
78%

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



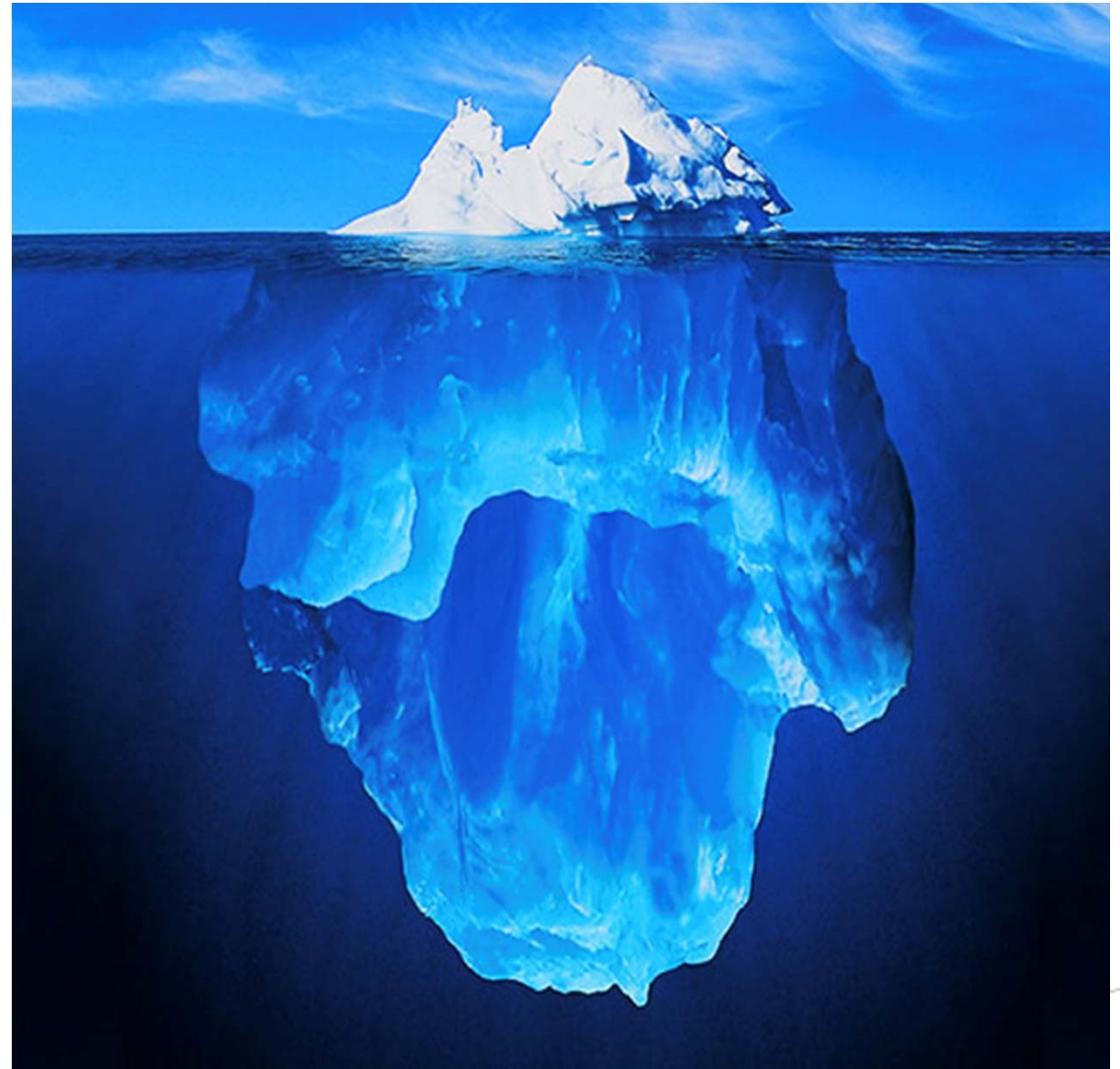
<https://theconversation.com/new-evidence-supports-the-belief-that-south-africas-education-is-not-all-bad-132280>

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

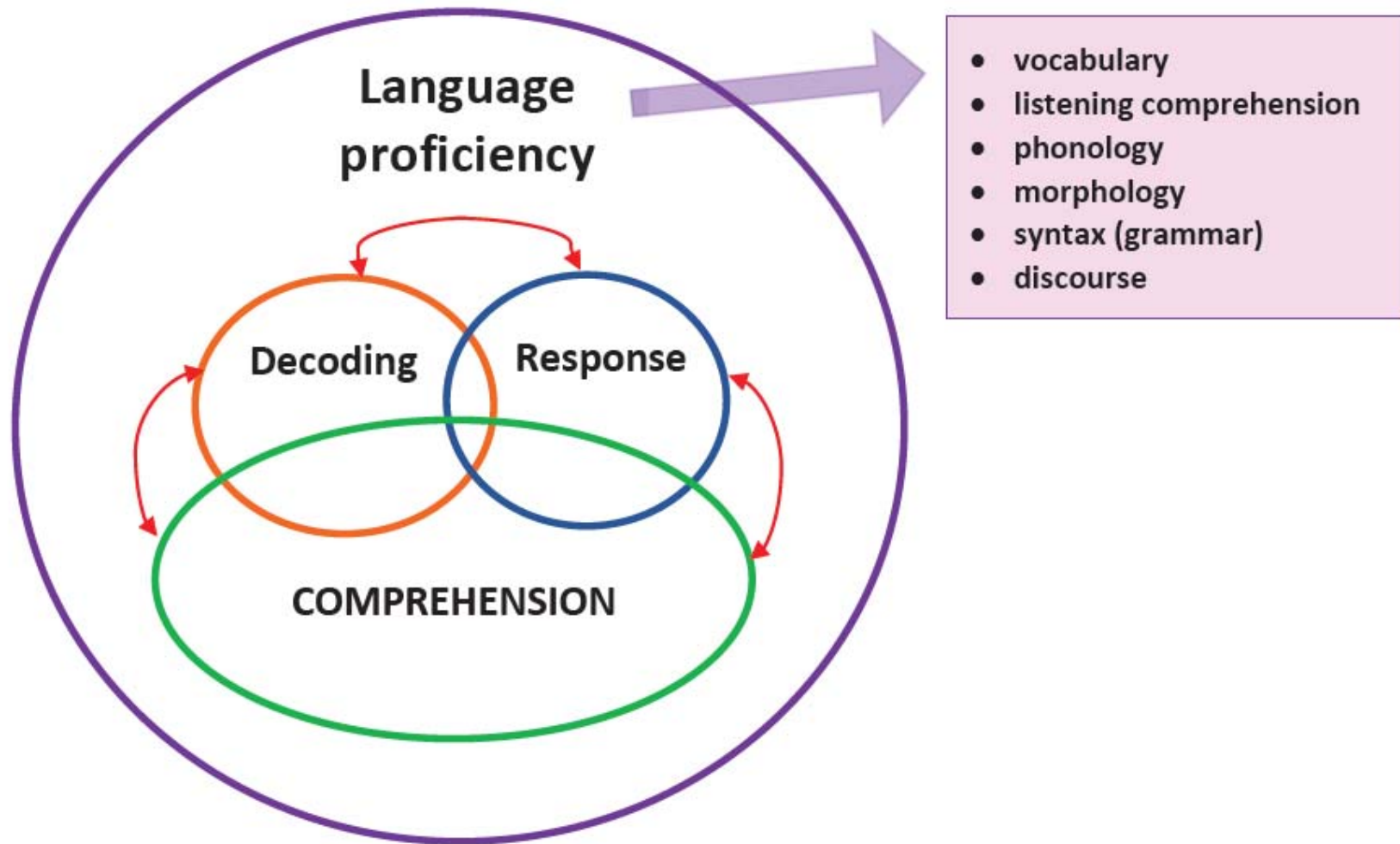
Benchmark acceptable practice in management:

- 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?



Why do we need benchmarks for African languages?

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

Bantu- Bleek 1850
“a frequently occurring plural form of the word meaning person”

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

Why do we need benchmarks for African languages?

Language	Text						
Sepedi	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 babengenakho ukudla.						
Gloss	There was a stranger who was very hungry. He came to a village and asked for food. Nobody had any food.						
	Words in Sentence1	Words in Sentence2	Words in Sentence3	Total words	Words per sentence	Letters per word	Total single syllable words: V/ CV
Sepedi	13	8	12	33	11	3.2	21
Xitsonga	8	3	10	21	7	4	9
isiZulu	3	5	3	11	3.6	8	0

Why do we need benchmarks for African languages?

OONONYE single consonants	OONOMBINI double consonants (digraphs)	OONOMBINI double consonants (blends)	OONONTATHU triple consonants (trigraphs)	OONONTATHU triple consonants (blends)	OONONE four consonants	OONONTLANU five consonants	IZANDI ZEMBOLEKO borrowed sounds	IZANDI EZIDITYANISIWEYO blended sounds preceded by 'm'
b	bh						bhl bhlouwu br ibrashhi	
c	ch	cw		chw				
d	dl, dz	dw, dy		dlw			dr idrowa	
f							fl iflawwa fr ifriji	
g	gc, gq, gx	gw		gcw, gqw, grw, gxw			gr igrabile gl iglasi	
h	hl			hlw				
j		jw						
k	kh, kr	kw		khw, krw			khr ikhrayoni kl iklasi kr ikrisimesi	
l		lw						
m		mb, mf, mp, mv						mf, mv, my, mn, mw, mk, ms, md, mg, mq, mj, ml, mz, mh, mc, (m)bh, (m)ng, (m)ch, (m)gq,

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