ACADEMIC LITERACY AT FOUNDATION PHASE LEVEL
AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION REPORT

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Synopsis

This research investigated the concept of academic literacy at Foundation Phase and attempted to operationalize it in such a way that it is applicable in a multilingual South African context. The investigation was done through the process of an extensive literature review. Given that there are so far very few comprehensive studies that have focussed on academic literacy at Foundation Phase in a multilingual context, the research ultimately aimed at providing a framework for the understanding of academic literacy at this level that can work cross-linguistically. In view of our context of the 11 official languages, the need for academic literacy skills to be generic and transferrable across the linguistic spectrum cannot be overemphasised, especially at Foundation Phase where learners are introduced to academic language or discourse for the first time. The investigation identifies several key issues with regard to academic literacy in general and South Africa in particular. It then provides an operational definition of academic literacy, its construct and the operationalization of the construct. It further proposes a multilingual literacy approach to ensure cross-linguistic transfer of academic skills. The investigation concludes by reflecting on the existing national curriculum statements, CAPS in particular and language education policy documents and their implications for the development of academic literacy at the Foundation Phase Level.

A Review of the Literature on Academic Literacy at Foundation Phase Level

1. Context, Rationale, Scope and Aim

1.1 Introduction

This research was commissioned by Umalusi to investigate the concept of academic literacy at Foundation Phase level and to operationalize it in such a way that it is applicable in a multilingual South African schooling context. The investigation was done through the process of an extensive literature review. Given that there are so far very few comprehensive studies that have focussed on academic literacy at Foundation Phase in a multilingual context, the research ultimately aimed at providing a framework for the understanding of academic literacy at this level that can work cross-linguistically. In view of our context in South Africa with 11 official languages, the need for academic literacy skills to be generic and transferrable across the linguistic spectrum cannot be overemphasised, especially at Foundation Phase where learners are expected to progressively attain the fundamental language skills necessary for beginning to use academic language or discourse. The investigation identifies several key issues with regard to academic literacy in general and South Africa in particular. It further shows the implications of these key issues for the newly introduced Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) for the Foundation Phase.

1.2 Context and rationale

Although academic literacy is arguably the most important factor in students' academic success, its distinguishing characteristics and its operationalization at Foundation Phase level in South Africa have not yet been adequately researched. Even where research exists, it is scattered across a number of different areas of inquiry and documents. This makes it difficult for policymakers and education practitioners to draw inferences from such research for curricula design and instructional purposes.

An investigation of this kind is much needed in South Africa in view of the unique multilingual nature of the country. South Africa has, following its transformation to democracy, adopted a policy that recognises eleven official languages. Although the situation 'on the ground' reflects an overwhelming push towards the use of the English language in

educational, testing, and workplace settings, there is a general consensus that education at Foundation Level should be accessible to all learners in their different Home Languages. However, in terms of the current policy, learners are expected to make a switch to English (or to a lesser extent Afrikaans) as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in Grade 4. From 2012 onwards, the revised National Curriculum Statements as represented by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (Government Gazette, 2011) envision that English (again with Afrikaans as an option) will be introduced as a subject in Grade 1 and learners can either take it as a First Additional Language (FAL) or Second Additional Language as a precursor to those languages becoming the LoLT from Grade 4 onwards.

Although not explicitly stated as such, it is clear that the policy direction is one of foregrounding English as the 'main' language of South Africans. There are numerous issues that arise from this position – not least of which being the possibility of subtractive bilingualism in which learners emerge with English skills at the expense of their mother-tongue (L1). Possible outcomes of such policy, while beyond the scope of the current document, are among the motivators for the research presented herein. This research aims to uncover generic 'academic literacy' skills that are readily transferrable across languages as the learners are expected to study at least two languages from Grade 1. Thus, both the Home Language and English or even Afrikaans need not be seen as being in conflict, but as being complementary to one another. Such language complementarity needs to be supported by a curriculum that takes account of the linguistic diversity in the country and provides learners with academic skills that are transferrable across languages, so that the majority of learners whose L1 is not English are not left in a situation in which they are unable to demonstrate the range of their academic proficiency in the language in which they are assessed. Essentially, there is a need for the development of an academic literacy 'construct' that promotes the use of multilingualism so that learners are not disadvantaged when they are called upon to demonstrate their academic proficiency.

The above discussion suggests that a working definition of academic literacy and the academic literacy 'construct' need to be developed in the context of the South African multilingual schooling system. Accordingly, an operational definition and academic literacy 'construct' for Foundation Phase Level has been proposed. This construct is based on the functional view of language rather than a structural or skills-based one.

1.3 Scope and purpose

As an exploratory investigation, this research was focussed mainly on the definition of academic literacy, its construct and its operationalization at Foundation Phase Level. The research also includes the issue of academic language and its role in academic literacy development. The role of multilingualism in promoting academic literacy in multilingual school contexts was also considered as it demands the adoption of innovative pedagogic approaches to literacy development. The research also reviewed the existing curriculum documents, CAPS in particular, and the language-in-education policy for Foundation Phase Level and their implications for academic literacy development.

Research Questions

1. What skills or linguistic features constitute 'academic literacy' at the Foundation Phase of a learner's schooling career?
2. How can such identified skills be operationalized?

1.4 Research approach

This research is exploratory in nature and was based on a thorough literature review with the aim of defining and describing the concept of 'academic literacy' at the Foundation Phase level. The literature review was intended to be a broad overview of the research that is currently available in the field, and was aimed particularly at defining and operationalizing the competencies associated with 'academic literacy'. All 'academic literacy' skills or competencies thus uncovered should be able to be identified or inserted into curriculum documents that are relevant to all language groups in South Africa.

The methodology followed entailed a thorough literature review. An extensive examination of both South African and international research on the areas of 'academic literacy', 'academic language', cross-linguistic transfer and any additional areas of relevance was conducted.

Collection of documents for the review was guided by the three areas of enquiry listed above and the fourth one which is State policies on these areas. In each of these areas the focus was on existing literature and additional research needed in order to provide guidance on operationalizing academic literacy.

The types of documents reviewed included professional journals, practitioner handbooks, policy documents, research project reports, theses, teaching methodological documents (action research), descriptive study (case study, classroom observation, exploratory analysis), correlation study, expert opinion based on research, linguistic analysis, quasi-experimental study, state policy and teaching standards.

The document search and selection of methods followed the following procedure: Phase 1: Initial document searches (databases, etc.), Phase 2: Document review and selection criteria (review of titles, abstracts, executive summaries and reference lists) and lastly the compilation of the final reference list and the review report.

1.5 Aim of this report

The aim of this report is to provide a definition of academic literacy and a clearly delineated description of readily identifiable and definable skills that can be classed as 'academic'. According to the brief for this project, the skills identified need to be generic in nature, be they linguistic and otherwise, and should not be based on skills that are required for the mastery of any specific language. Thus, such 'academic literacy' skills should be transferrable across languages. They should constitute foundational skills that are required for the performance of academic tasks irrespective of the language in which those tasks are presented.

1.6 Overview of the Report

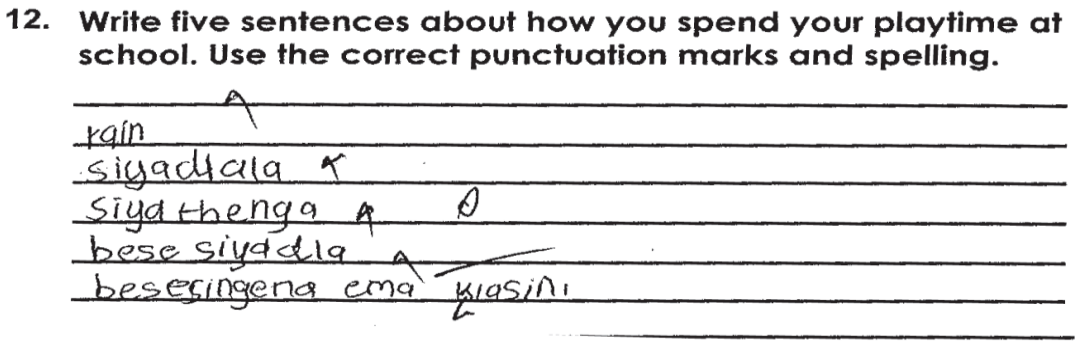
The report is organized around four areas used to guide the literature review. The first part of the report constitutes an introduction which is followed by the presentation of findings. The second part relates to the definition of academic literacy. This is followed by the third part that investigated the academic literacy 'construct' and its operationalization with particular reference to Foundation Phase level in South African education. The fourth one deals with academic language and its role in academic literacy development. This is followed by the

fifth part that addressed the issue of academic literacy development in multilingual school contexts and transferability of academic literacy skills across languages.

The last section of the report gives a reflection on the existing curriculum, CAPS in particular, and the language-in-education policy and their implications for academic literacy development at Foundation Level. This section is followed by the conclusion and recommendations.

2. Academic literacy problems in South African education

The undertaking of this research was motivated by the need to address ubiquitous academic literacy problems at schooling and tertiary education levels in South African education. At schooling level, research unequivocally shows that all is not well with respect to the standard of literacy. South African learners have consistently performed poorly when compared to those of other countries. This problem of poor literacy achievement is attested by the Department of Basic Education's (previously called the Department of Education) reports of the national and provincial systematic assessments conducted nationally in which Grade 3, Grade 4 and Grade 6 learners are assessed for academic literacy and numeracy. The Annual National Assessments (ANA) programme was first run in 2008. These tests are conducted on all Grades 1-6 and 9 learners in public schools. In Independent Schools that receive government subsidy the tests are written by either Grade 3 or 6 learners, whichever is the highest grade in a school. Before ANA tests were introduced in 2008, there were other systemic evaluation tests which were conducted in 2001, 2004 and 2007. As Reeves et al. (2008) pointed out, the results of the national Grade 3 literacy study conducted in 2001 and 2002 were so disturbing that the national DoE delayed the release of the findings. In 2007 the Department of Education conducted another systemic evaluation test for Grade 3. The results of this assessment showed a low literacy rate, but there was an improvement of learners mean literacy score from 30% in 2001 to 36% in 2006. However, although there is some improvement, the following extract from ANA test report of 2011 is quite revealing with regard to literacy problems at Foundation Phase level:


12. Write five sentences about how you spend your playtime at school. Use the correct punctuation marks and spelling.

rain
siyadlala
siyathenga
bese siyadla
besesingena ema klasini

Department of Basic Education (2011): Report on the Annual National Assessments of 2011

This extract was published in the ANA report of 2011. It is an answer of a Grade 3 learner who was responding to an English version of the test. The learner is clearly not a native speaker of English as he or she also uses isiZulu in his answer to the question. But, it is also clear that the learner understood the question though sometimes teachers are allowed to assist the learner in this regard. As may be seen from the question, the learner was expected to write five sentences about how he or she spends time at school using correct punctuation marks and spelling. From the learner's answer, it can be observed that language constitutes a major barrier to this learners' writing of the five sentences. The learner begins the first sentence in English and then switches to isiZulu which apparently is his or her mother tongue. But although the teacher marked the learner wrong, the sentences are acceptable in isiZulu. The only problem is the use of capital letters and punctuation marks. However, at Grade 3 a learner should be able to write short correct sentences in both Home Language and Additional language. Besides this example, the ANA report (2011) clearly shows that in general the Grade 3 learners assessed have difficulties in academic literacy skills such as reading, writing, thinking and reasoning and literacy across the curriculum. The report further shows that "from Grade 3 through to Grade 6 scores tended to dip remarkably and dropped significantly from Grade 4 onwards" (DBE, 2011:3). This drop in scores seems to be caused by the learners' poor reading proficiency which tends to be inadequate as learners progress to higher grades. The report shows that the average score percent dropped from 63% at Grade 1 to just above 31% at Grade 6 level. The lowest average score percent was 28% at both Grades 4 and 5. Learners also showed low skills in other modalities such as hand writing which was illegible even beyond the Foundation Phase. This could be an indication of either insufficient training in this important skill and/or inadequate practice in hand writing/letter formation.

Learners also showed a lack of basic literacy skills such as correct spelling of frequently used words, proper use of language forms (e.g. correct use of prepositions, plural forms, tense, opposites, synonyms, etc.). This could be a result of insufficient vocabulary, which could have risen from a lack of adequate reading and exposure to new words and how they are used. The results also showed generally low to poor comprehension skills. In most cases, learners tended to attempt only simple questions, i.e. those that required them to either extract information directly from given text or give short one-word answers. The report indicated that many learners failed to respond to questions that demanded complex skills of inferential reading. In respect of writing, the report shows that learners had inadequate ability to write creatively from given prompts (e.g. given a picture and asked to write what one thinks about it) or to transform a given text into another form that requires basic comprehension.

The problem of academic literacy in South Africa is also identified in several other studies. For example the Howie, et al. (2007)'s report, *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)* is a summary report of the international study conducted in 2005 to investigate children's reading literacy competence. The report evaluated the performance of Grade 4 and 5 learners from 40 countries and the test was conducted in the language they have been taught since Grade 1. The report shows that South Africa's literacy performance of Grade 5 learners was far below international benchmarks. The international benchmarks are divided into Low International benchmark where learners can focus on and retrieve explicitly stated information, Intermediate International benchmark where learners can make straightforward inferences, High International benchmark where learners can interpret and integrate ideas and information, and Advanced International benchmark where learners can examine and evaluate content, language and textual elements (Howie, et al. 2007)). Only 22 percent of learners from South Africa achieved a low benchmark, compared to 94 percent of learners from all countries. The report further shows that only 13 percent reached the Intermediate International benchmark. From this report, it is clear that literacy development in South Africa is still faced with a great challenge. The report identified a range of factors related to the home (early literacy, access to books, parents' level of education and reading habits); learner (attitude towards reading, self-concept); and the school environment (access to books, teaching strategies, and classroom practices) that might have contributed to poor literacy performance.

Another study was conducted by Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in 2006 with approximately 78 000 Grade 8 learners in the Western Cape. This study (Prinsloo, 2008/2009) also revealed serious literacy problems among secondary school learners. Learners scored best with multiple-choice questions but struggled to produce their own written responses. The report further indicates that learners had difficulties in interpreting texts from other learning areas and the isiXhosa speaking learners experienced language problems in dealing with the content areas. This was mainly because of the difference between English, which was used in the assessment and as the medium of instruction, and their mother tongue. But, above all, these findings show the lack of literacy development which might be traced back to foundation phase (Prinsloo, 2008/2009).

The literacy problems at schooling are also highlighted by the study conducted by the HSRC to evaluate literacy teaching at 20 schools in Limpopo during 2007 and 2008. The findings of this study (Reeves, et al., 2008) clearly show that learners in that province are struggling to achieve the competencies expected for the respective grades because of factors ranging from inadequate reading and writing exercises to absence of specific and good literacy instruction, lack of integration between learning areas and learning support materials, and poor homes and communities.

Lastly, the problem of poor academic literacy competencies is also alluded to by studies on tertiary education such as the recent *National Benchmarking Test (NBMT) Report* (2009) based on tests conducted at a few selected universities. The results of the *NBMT* show that most of the English Additional Language (EAL) students who enter higher education have not developed the required academic literacy competencies required for academic success in higher education.

The problem with the different academic literacy assessment tests is that the tests are sometimes given in the language in which learners have not yet developed academic literacy. Furthermore, "academic literacy demands are seldom made explicit to students, and little research has focussed on the linguistic expectations of assigned tasks, even though these expectations remain implicit in the standards by which students are judged as they progress through grades" (Schllepegrell 2010:3). With regard to ANA, only a few guidelines and exemplars are provided to teachers and learners.

It is against this backdrop that this study was undertaken to define an academic literacy 'construct', its operationalization and the role of academic language and multilingualism. With regard to the latter, it is important to consider that despite the eleven official languages recognised in South Africa, the situation 'on the ground' reflects an overwhelming push towards the use of the English language in educational, testing, and workplace settings.

Thus, this report argues for the need to take account of the existing linguistic diversity while providing skills that are ultimately demonstrable in the language of assessment and additional languages. This is an area that still needs much research as too little work has been done in this country in respect of multilingual academic literacy, that is, the kinds of tasks that may be adopted in multilingual contexts in promoting academic literacy. Much of the research on academic literacy emanates from Anglophone contexts where much focus has been on monolingual writing practices and writing in the medium of English. In multilingual contexts, there is a need to provide multilingual learners with academic skills that are transferrable across languages, so that the majority of learners whose L1 is not English are not left in a situation in which they are unable to demonstrate the range of their academic proficiency in the target language.

3. Definition of academic literacy

The term 'academic literacy' is complex as it can be viewed from a number of disciplinary perspectives. Accordingly, different appellations are used to denote this term. These appellations are 'codes', 'conventions' 'ground rules', 'norms and values', 'principles', 'academic literacy practices' (Baynham 1995) or 'competencies' and 'academic course' (Gee,1998).

The two-word nature of the term 'academic literacy' adds to its complexity. Although 'academic' relates to education, the difficulty is that "there is no simple dichotomy between 'academic' and 'nonacademic' literacy, but instead many varieties and degrees of literacy depending on the range of uses to which the skills of literacy are put" (Well, et al. 1981 cit in Simich-Ddgeon 1989). The term 'literacy' is well established in literature and dates back to the 19th century. This word comes from 'literate' and originally a literate person was a person of letters though sometimes also referred to as a person who could read literatures (Christie, 2005:4). However, this word or term has been extensively used in educational theory and

research only in about the last 25 years or so. This term is now widely used in educational policy guidelines and has been the subject of much research. Christie (2005) regards the term 'literacy' as a useful one, since it serves to emphasise the very close relationship of reading and writing. Thus, "a good educational program should stress the relationship of reading and writing, encouraging children to move between the two, using the experiences gained in one activity to inform and enrich the other" (Christie 2005:4).

What then is academic literacy?

There are many definitions of academic literacy. These definitions range from more narrow approaches to broader approaches. As Baratt-Pugh, et al. (2006:xv) pointed out "both of these definitions have their own literatures, approaches, methodologies and theoretical bases, and reflect the differing social, political, cultural, economic, technological, pedagogical and philosophical points of historical juncture."

The narrow approach to viewing literacy is greatly influenced by the skills approach or autonomous model of literacy. The skills approach sees academic literacy as the simple ability to read and write. Accordingly, teachers' main focus is on assisting learners to write in correct spelling and in correct grammatical sentences. This approach assumes that literacy is a technical skill, neutral in its aims and universal across languages. The skills of reading and writing can be decomposed into vocabulary, grammar and composition. Teaching sounds and letters, phonics and standard language may be the important focus. For elementary level, these skills may also include "pre-reading skills such as concept of print and alphabetic knowledge, word-level skills including decoding, word-reading, pseudo-word reading, and spelling; and text-level skills including fluency, reading comprehension, and writing skills" (Grant, et al. 2007:1). The focus is also on correcting errors in reading and writing and achieving high scores on tests of reading and writing which in most cases tend to assess decomposed and decontexualised language skills, eliciting superficial comprehension rather than deeper language thinking and understanding (Baker, 2000:323). As several scholars have argued, academic literacy cannot be viewed as being limited to mastery of linguistic features such as sound, form and meaning, hence the need for a broader view of academic literacy.

The broader view of academic literacy is influenced by an ideological approach, which is different from the autonomous model because it considers literacy to be profoundly

implicated in social experience and behaviour rather than being a neutral thing. Rather, the focus should also be on broad aspects of communication such as the ability to interact with others or texts and negotiate meaning in contexts (cf. Weidemann 2011:103). Accordingly, the broad approach to academic literacy regards academic literacy as an 'academic discourse' which is situated in particular social, economic, cultural and political contexts (Gee 1996). In his book published in French in 1965 and later translated into English under the title *Academic Discourse: Linguistic misunderstanding and professorial power*, Bourdieu, et al. (1994:28) defined academic discourse as "the ability to manipulate scholastic discourse". The notion of academic literacy as discourse is also articulated by Gee (1998) who postulated two types of discourse, namely, "primary" and "secondary" discourse. Primary discourse has to do with everyday communication. Secondary discourse is a specialised form of discourse which is acquired mainly through schooling. Weidemann (2011:103) also employed the notion of discourse to academic literacy. Accordingly, he defines academic literacy as "the ability to handle academic discourse at university level." A similar expanded definition is given by Leibowitz (2001:2) who stated that academic literacy "can be summarized as a culturally specific set of linguistic and discourse conventions, influenced by written forms utilised primarily in academic institutions".

However, this dichotomy between narrow and broader approaches (autonomous and ideological models) to academic literacy is viewed by scholars such as Christie (2005) as unhelpful for literacy development as it deflects attention from the nature of language itself as a semiotic or meaning-making system.

Given the various definitions of the term 'academic literacy', it is important to consider how academic literacy is defined in our national curriculum statements. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (2002:147) does not mention the term 'academic literacy', rather it only uses the term 'literacy' which is defined as "the ability to read and use written information and to write for different purposes [differentiated]. It is part of a general ability [generic] to make sense of one's world". The NCS definition is an interesting one, since it sounds much more like 'academic literacy' than literacy alone. This definition shifts emphasis away from the view of literacy as being limited to the ability to read and write or the mastery of linguistic features such as sound, form and meaning to a broad one that considers aspects of communication such as the ability to make sense of one's world. Weideman (2011:103), for example, defines academic literacy as the ability to interact with others or texts and negotiate

meaning in context. A similar definition is given by Schleppegrell (2004) who describes academic literacy as involving "the ability to use written symbols and conventions to communicate ideas about the world and to extract meaning from the written texts (i.e. the ability to read and write)". Academic literacy is thus a process of learning to read and write in specific ways that embody values and attitudes about the provisional nature of knowledge. Weideman, et al. (2013:3) provides a construct of academic literacy at Grade 12 level as "a differentiated language ability in a number of discourse types involving a range of typically different texts, and a generic ability incorporating task-based, functional and formal aspects of language".

Since the NCS definition is broad enough and is already in the curriculum, it will be adopted as the operational definition for our study. It will form the basis for the development of our academic literacy 'construct' which will be discussed in the next section.

4. Academic Literacy 'construct' and its Operationalization

In South Africa, there are not yet well developed academic literacy 'constructs' for Foundation Phase Level. The only academic literacy 'constructs' that exist were developed for assessment tests at tertiary education level. The definitions in the NCS (2005) and the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS), in particular, are based on the four language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing with an additional skill of critical language awareness. As already mentioned, the problem with these four skills is that they are presented as independent entities and as such they do not constitute a unitary construct. Although teachers are required to integrate these skills in teaching, there are no clear guidelines and examples on how they should interweave them together. In fact, it makes no sense to require teachers to integrate the four skills as they are never separated (Weideman, et al, 2013). Weideman, et al. (2013) propose a move away from the skills-based approach to a skills-neutral approach. However, as Cummins and Yee-Yun (2007) caution, the dilemma here is that "if we ignore the distinctions within the four language skills, we risk designing curricula and language instruction practices that are poorly aligned with the needs of learners and the overall goals of the programme." Accordingly, it is advisable to adopt a broadly skills-neutral approach and still maintain the language curricula and language instruction practices which are framed around the four skills plus the added skill of critical language awareness. The proposed construct merely requires a shift of focus from discrete skills to academic literacy competences. The development of the proposed academic literacy

‘construct’ is based on the social functional theories of language espoused by scholars such as Halliday (1978, 1985). Accordingly, in developing the proposed academic literacy ‘construct’ for the Foundation Phase, an attempt was made to consider academic literacy competencies within their broader contexts. For example, the focus of teaching writing should not just be a technical skill, but to engage learners in process of learning to write about writing and to do so naturally for the purpose of meaningful communication and pleasure. There also needs to be a holistic and integrated approach in teaching reading, writing, spelling and oracy. For example, academic literacy components like phonics need to be taught in meaningful words or contexts. The teacher can use a variety of texts and story books to stimulate children’s power of imagination, for their enjoyment and literacy development (Baker, 2000:324).Thus, the phonic approach prescribed by CAPS needs to be used in complementarity with the whole language approach which was previously recommended by the NCS (2005). As literacy research shows (Christie 2005), it is not a question of using either or one of these approaches; as the two can be used creatively together to develop effective academic literacy.

The proposed academic literacy ‘construct’ is based on the academic literacy components or elements identified from the literature review and the national curriculum statements documents (NCS 2005, CAPS and ANA tests guidelines). The first two curriculum documents were used to identify academic literacy components and the activities or tasks that may be used to operationalize them. The ANA tests were useful for identifying any academic literacy components that are focussed on in these assessments. In fact, the ANA guidelines shift away from a focus on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and general writing to academic literacy components such as comprehension and vocabulary competences. As the ultimate aim of developing academic literacy at primary and secondary levels is to prepare learners for tertiary education, existing academic literacy constructs developed for universities such as the National Benchmark Tests were also analysed to check if they have aspects that can be taught right from Foundation Phase level.

The proposed academic literacy ‘construct’ for the Foundation Phase discussed above can entail the process of developing linguistic competences or abilities:

- to represent ideas concisely in words (orally or in written form)
- to comprehend what is either said or written
- to read print by attaching sounds to written letters and words or conventions (extract meaning from the written texts)
- to explain or justify a position
- to summarize the plot of a story

- to define and relate mathematical concepts
- to evaluate or construct arguments
- to interpret and explain how an author indirectly conveys character's feelings
- to use related clusters of vocabulary to express the content.
- to use connector words that join sentences, clauses, phrases and words in logical relationships of time, cause and effect, comparison, or addition[1]
- to use cohesive devices that link information in writing and help the text flow and hold together[2]
- to use grammatical structures such as comparisons

The full operationalization of this construct requires a thorough analysis of the existing national curricula statements documents and the CAPS (see Annexure 1). An analysis of the following ANA test reports and guidelines may be useful in operationalizing academic literacy construct. The Grade 3 ANA test report for 2011 (Department of Basic Education, 2011) for example assesses learners on their ability to:

- make meaning of written text and demonstrate comprehension by combining pieces of information from different parts of a text/story to construct a comprehensive answer.
- make meaning of written text and demonstrate this by extracting information (involving an unfamiliar word) directly from the text/story
- make meaning of written text and demonstrate this by extracting information (involving a frequently used word) directly from the text/story
- understand how language is used and demonstrate this by using correct grammatical structures and punctuate sentences appropriately.
- use language to describe similarities and differences, and to analyse, compare and contrast information (assessed in the context of comparing the different seasons of the year)
- re-write sentences given in the past tense and change them into the future tense correctly.
- use punctuation correctly to improve the meaning of a given sentence.
- re-write sentences given in the past tense and change them into the present tense correctly

(Department of Basic Education, 2011:7-11)

These ANA tests competencies are useful for identifying academic literacy skills that need to be developed for the relevant grade. Accordingly, a systematic analysis of the different ANA tests can yield useful information for the operationalization of an academic literacy 'construct' for the foundation phase. Although the results of the ANA test have been presented in the report according to the four skills, academic literacy competences or abilities

[1] Knapp, P. and Watkins, M. (2005). *Genre, text, grammar: Technologies for teaching and assessing writing.* Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, Ltd. p. 49
[2] Knapp & Watkins, op. cit., p. 47

can be easily identified. However, the full operationalization of the construct will also need to be supported by evidence-based research of teachers' good practices in schools.

Language proficiency and academic literacy development

As Schleppegrell (2012:409) pointed out, "success in school calls for using language in new ways to accomplish increasingly challenging discursive tasks across grade levels and school subjects". This language of school is what is now referred to in literature as academic language. Academic language can be defined broadly as the language used in academic settings to help learners acquire and use knowledge (Zwiers, 2008; Snow & Uccelli, 2009). However, it can also be defined narrowly as "the set of words, grammar and organisational strategies used to describe complex ideas, higher-order thinking processes and abstract concepts" (Zwiers, 2008:20). The first definition refers to usage or function whereas the second focuses on structural or linguistic features of academic language. It is important to note, however, that academic language is difficult to define as it is complex and its terms of reference are wide. Thus both structural features and function need to be considered in defining academic language. Structural or linguistic features include phonological, lexical, grammatical, sociolinguistic and discourse features (Scarcella, 2003).

The ability to use and understand academic language is a prerequisite for the academic success of all learners in schools including Foundation Phase Learners as it enables knowledge transfer within the language arts and across the discipline. In multilingual countries, the focus is very often on the acquisition of school languages rather than the development of academic language. It is important to realise that learners at Foundation Phase Level come to school having already acquired their home languages, and sometime even with some kind or form of academic language or secondary discourse depending on their home contexts. "These early differences in academic language may have long-lasting consequences for school achievement as command of this language enables children to comprehend textbooks, solve math word problems, and participate in instructional discourse in a linguistically appropriate way that is highly valued by teachers" (Schleppegrell 2012:0). Schleppegrell (2012:422) argues for the need for explicit instruction of academic language to young children. She has the following to say in this regard:

> While acknowledging that major controversies in language acquisition research are far from resolved… we assume that especially in the case of emergent academic

> language, special input is required to provide the young language learner with sufficient tokens and types of the lexical, grammatical, and textual forms of academic language that are in everyday interpersonal communication. It has been widely documented that children's early language skills, such as receptive and expressive vocabulary, morphosyntactic skills, and language comprehension, are related to both the quantity and quality of language input. (Schleppegrell, 2012:422)

To promote the development of academic language at school, more insight is needed into specific characteristics of the language input at home that promote children's emergent academic language. Daily family routines, though oral and informal, support the children's initial acquisition of academic language (Scheele, et al. 2012). Macdonald (2002) also argues for the need to understand the home context of South African learners and the language practices in such contexts. However, as no community can lay claim to academic language as its mother tongue, it follows that it is a language or register that is developed through the use of other languages. The development of academic language or the academic register requires learners to have achieved a threshold level of proficiency in their primary languages (Cummins, 1979, 2000). Thus, in multilingual educational contexts, the development of academic language and academic literacy can be effectively facilitated through the use of more than one language.

5. A multilingual approach to academic literacy development and linguistic transfer

Cazden, Cope, Fairclough and Gee (1996), in their seminal discussion of multiliteracies described a fundamental shift in understanding of reading and writing literacy from one which assumes a page-bound monolingual, monocultural environment to one which includes multicultural, multilingual, and multiple channels of communication. Thus, a monolingual approach to academic literacy development is regarded as not conducive to effective academic literacy development in multilingual contexts (Garcia, 2009; Canagarajah, 2006). Scholars such as Garcia (2009) recommend a heteroglossic or translanguaging approach which promotes the simultaneous use of students' linguistic repertoires to scaffold the development of academic language proficiency. This approach provides a better alternative to promote the use of learners Home Languages and an Additional Language to promote academic literacy development in multilingual environments.

So far there is not yet a clear theoretical and pedagogical framework in South African schooling to manage multiple languages in ways that enhance learners' linguistic repertoires in the curriculum. In the Foundation Phase, for example, there are no clear guidelines in the CAPS documents on how learners' Home Languages will be used in combination with Additional Languages - English in particular which is now introduced as a subject from Grade 1. In countries such as India, learners primary languages are used in complementarity with English as media of instruction or what Dua (1994) regards as a *complementary language use model.* This model is also recommended for learning and teaching in South Africa (Madiba, 2004, 2010a). This model is based on the *complementarity principle* (cf. Grosjean, 2008:23) which requires the simultaneous use of African languages in tandem or complementarity with English or any other language as a medium for academic language development. This principle is in line with how bi-/multilinguals use their linguistic repertoires in daily life. Grosjean (2008:23) notes aptly: "Bilinguals usually acquire and use their languages for different purposes, in different domains of life, with different people." This model is characterised by language complementarities: between dialects and standard language, between home language and language of learning and teaching, everyday (informal) and scientific (formal) language, and between conversational language and academic language. Other models such as the parallel model and translanguaging are used in literature to denote ways in which languages may be used together to promote effective learning and teaching. The pedagogy that employs these approaches to language use is described by scholars such as Canagarajah (2006) as the 'pedagogy of shuttling between languages'. Balfour (2005) regards this type of pedagogy as 'shifting pedagogy'. In South Africa, this pedagogy of shuttling between languages has been noted in several studies, particularly those carried out in urban schools (cf. Plüddemann, 2011; Setati, et al., 2002). These studies clearly show that monolingual teaching and learning is no longer feasible in peri-urban schools given the extent to which home languages are mixed with English. Thus Plüddemann (2011) concludes that "in most urban contexts in South Africa today, a monolingual orientation that insists on a strict use of the prestige or standard variety would be almost as alienating to learners as an English-only approach".

The advantage of the proposed model is that it allows the simultaneous use of both indigenous African languages and English. It is not a question of either/or as both are possible. Furthermore, this model shifts the focus away from viewing languages as discrete entities to viewing them as fluid and intermingling. Studies on translanguaging convincingly

show how the intermingling of languages or dialects can be effective in developing students' academic language proficiency in the command of the language itself and across the curriculum (Van der Walt & Ruiters, 2011). Several other studies that show the effectiveness of using languages in complementarity to facilitate aspects of academic language proficiency, such as concept literacy (Madiba, 2010b), high order thinking skills (Cummins, 2000), multilingual writing (Canagarajah, 2009) and translanguaging (Garcia, 2009, Creese & Blackledge, 2011, Plüddemann, 2011).

A further advantage of adopting a multilingual approach to academic literacy development is the eminent potential for academic literacy skills transfer. Multilingual literacy development promotes transfer of academic literacy competences from one language to another. Language transfer has a long history in second language research although there is still little agreement as to what constitutes transfer. Recent syntheses of research on second language literacy development suggest a broad definition of transfer to be the ability to learn new language and literacy skills by drawing on the previously acquired resources (August & Shanahan, 2006, Riches & Genesee, 2006). "Investigation into cross-linguistic relationships in first and second language literacy skill development has shown that phonological awareness skills are positively correlated across languages (Cisero & Royer, 1995). Each language comprises sound segments that learners need to know as part of their literacy development. The skill to recognise sound segments in one language can be easily transferred to the additional language. In fact, the learning of another language makes learners become aware of the sound system of their language. According to Geva and Verhoeven (2000:265), "L1-L2 transfer at the level of underlying component skills such as phonological awareness relates to word recognition and spelling". Similarly, Protor, August and Carlo (2006) found a compelling relationship between the first and second language of students in their investigation into reading comprehension.

Linguistic transfer may also be understood from two abiding frameworks (Genesee, Geva, Dressler & Kamil 2006): linguistic interdependence (Cummins 1979, 2000) and contrastive analysis. Both of these frameworks provide tools for pedagogical considerations within this multilingual literacy approach as they are directly concerned with analysing the nature of language learning, language processing and language operating principles. According to the Interdependence Hypothesis the level of L2 competence which a bilingual child attains is partially a function of the type of competence the child has developed in L1 at the time when

intensive exposure to L2 begins. This implies that the level of competence of L2 of a child depends on the level of competence in L1 before exposure to L2 for cognitive and academic language proficiency (CALP) achievement, whereas they are independent for basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) (Cummins, 1979). The child's skills, knowledge, values and attitude developed in the L1 are transferred to the L2. On the other hand Cummins (1979:233) notes that for children whose L1 skills are less well developed in certain respects, intensive exposure to L2 in the initial grades is likely to impede the continued development of L1. So educators should also take note of this possible shortcoming or disadvantage. It might be helpful for a child to first acquire CALP or other academic literacy competencies in L1 in order to transfer such skills in L2 because this might help a child to achieve a high level of competence in both L1 and L2. However, according to this hypothesis, which is regarded by some scholars as its drawback, a child cannot develop competence in L2 before starting to learn the L1, both L1 and L2 may not develop enough to enable the child to achieve high academic success. Perhaps policy implementers need to take Cummins' language education theory more seriously and accept that a bilingual education will only be successful when children successfully achieve CALP in both L1 and L2.

The study of generative linguistics, the work of Noam Chomsky for example, which is based on the theory of Universal Grammar, provides further insight on the potential for transfer between languages as human languages are considered to share core principles such as linearity, discreteness, recursion, and dependence and locality which are considered to be universal or applicable across languages. It is these commonalities between languages which make transfer possible as the differences in linguistic structures are only at surface level. Thus, it is only surface variations that often form the basis for the isolation of language curricula and programmes in schools. The question is whether the isolation of languages on the basis of surface variation benefits the learner and whether there is a basis for varying degrees of integration across language curricula and whether that is educationally beneficial.

In accord with the multilingual literacy approach, the different languages may be used in parallel or fluidly to facilitate academic language learning activities such as building of oral language patterns, activities for awareness of sounds and systemic phonics, phonological aspects and vocabulary and integrated developmentally sequenced use of these activities across language. As Cummins and Yee-Yun (2009:339) pointed out, the importance of using different languages in academic development cannot be overemphasised as "an almost

universal finding that emerges from a vast amount of research on bilingual programmes around the world is that spending part of the day teaching in a minority language entails no long-term adverse effects on students' academic development in the majority language".

6. Implications of the research findings for the new CAPS

This investigation has made several key findings with regard to academic literacy which have implications for the implementation of the newly introduced CAPS at Foundation Phase level. The new CAPS, like the NCS (2005) promotes a monolingual and separation-of-language approach to academic and literacy development. The curriculum provides for the study of home languages as a subject and their use as media of instruction. As from 2012, the curriculum requires English to be studied as a First Additional Language from Grade 1. The problem with this approach is that the home language and the additional language(s) are taught or used separately from each other. The use of this approach in multilingual contexts is contrary to existing educational theories of scholars such as Cummins (1979, 2000) who maintains that although languages may appear to be different on the surface, they have a common underlying storage. Thus, there is cross-linguistic influence resulting in what Cummins (2000) refers to as Common Underlying Proficiency. The use of each language contributes to this storage with the result that languages are interdependent. Although according to Cummins (2000) at least five to seven years are required to develop academic language proficiency to an adequate level, this period could be shortened with direct academic language instruction with learners given enough support and exposure to the target language(s) (Scarcella, 2003).

Furthermore, the use of notions such as 'home language" and 'additional language' is problematic. The CAPS seems to be based on the assumption that all learners have a home language that could be used as a primary medium of education within the additive multilingual approach. The problem with this assumption is that the Language-in-Education policy (LiEP) on which the CAPS is based, states unequivocally that only official languages may be selected as the LoLT or additional subject of study. This notion of 'home language' raises several questions in the context of South Africa. In Limpopo, for example, the issue of home language or mother tongue is complex as some languages such as Northern Sotho (Sepedi) which was identified by the majority of learners as their home language only exists in written form and is not well known by learners and possibly even by teachers (Webb, et al. 2004:122). This is because of the manner in which the language was standardised. According

to Webb, et al. (2004:125) Northern Sotho has about 27 regional dialects which are mutually not wholly intelligible. Thus learners from other dialects such as Tlokwa, Lobedu, Kutswe, Pai and Pulana have to learn standard Northern Sotho as a second language. Only learners from the Pedi dialect on which standard Northern Sotho is mainly based may benefit from the use of these languages as a LoLT. Webb et al. (2004) seriously question the viability of using standard Northern Sotho as a LoLT and argue strongly for the need for re-standardisation of the language to make it a more inclusive and legitimate language of the whole community.

Thus, the classification of languages into home languages, first or second additional languages needs to be revisited. As several scholars have pointed out (e.g. Pennycook, 2002. Khubchandani 2003, Makoni and Meinhof 2003), in plurilingual societies there is a need to revisit the conceptualization of a 'home language' as in most cases the languages which learners identify as home languages are not the actual languages they use at home. Khubchandani (2003) argues that in plurilingual societies there should be a distinction between languages which are the first speech acquired in infancy and languages which are used as markers of group or ethnic affiliation. Thus, in the case of Northern Sotho, although some learners may identify this language as their home language, in reality this is not their first 'native' speech acquired in infancy and in which they were socialized. Makoni and Meinhof (2003:5) argued that "such standardised indigenous languages are then quite arbitrarily assumed to represent the mother tongues of the people concerned, when the people often have nothing like native speaker proficiency in them". Thus they argue that the speakers often find themselves having limited proficiency in these languages which are supposedly their mother tongue and such limited proficiency "has potentially vast negative implications for the success of education in that mother tongue." (Makoni and Meinhof 2003) These scholars "suggest that being educated through their supposed 'mother tongue' will not necessarily be beneficial to learners, and that 'mother tongue' education, vocally and persistently touted as a panacea for Africa's educational problems, is often highly problematic" (Makoni and Meinhof 2003:5). There seems to be a growing consensus among scholars that home speech or dialects need to be also considered especially at Foundation Phase Level as they form part of learners' linguistic repertoires. Khubchandani (2003) argues that education models which do "not take into account the complexity of speech variation across dialects in flux (and in plurilingual societies, often across languages) at the grassroots level" (Khubchandani 2003) are elitist and are a remnant of the colonial language policies. It

is clear from the foregoing that there is a need for CAPS to be based on a good understanding of "the specific configurations of what languages are used, what they represent, and what values they may carry by understanding the complexity of specific context" (Pennycook 2002:23).

The second problem of the new CAPS in promoting the development of effective academic literacy is the fact that it is designed and structured to promote early exit bilingualism rather than additive bilingualism. This raises serious concern in view of the fact that at present, about 78% of learners in South African schools switch to English in Grade Four (Heugh, 2011:153). This early exit to English destabilises the development of academic language proficiency among the learners who have indigenous African languages as primary languages. These students are transitioned to English before developing strong foundational academic language in their home language and also in English which has been introduced as the First Additional Language for only three years. As a result learners transition to English-medium tuition with a vocabulary of not more than 500 words compared to native English learners 7000 words at the same level of schooling (cf. Heugh, 2011). This is not surprising as the learning of English as an additional language can prepare learners to use it as medium of instruction within three years (Heugh, 2011:142). Nowhere in the world has the use of an additional language as the only medium of instruction been successful in developing the requisite academic literacy competencies among multilingual learners.

Given the foregoing, it can be argued that the current language curriculum merely facilitates transition from mother tongue to English without promoting transfer of cognitive academic language competencies across languages and grades. In fact, as already mentioned, the curriculum does not recognise academic language as a distinct register that can be explicitly taught and transferred across languages and grades. A study by Van Rooyen and Jordaan (2009), for example, established that aspects of academic language such as vocabulary (concepts) and complex sentence comprehension are not always recognized and developed within the educational system. A study by Van der Walt (2009) on code switching, also points to curriculum ambivalence with regard to the use of this academic language aspect by teachers in dealing with language problems in class.

It is important to note that when dealing with academic literacy the CAPS leaves much to be desired. In some instances, there seems to be a theoretical confusion as the CAPS prescribes a phonic approach to literacy development. The RNCS (2005) recommended the whole language teaching approach which was based on western theories. As literacy research shows (Christie 2005), it is not a question of using either or one of these approaches; - they can be used creatively together to develop academic literacy.

The last problem to note with the CAPS for African Home Languages is that they are based on the English curriculum. The CAPS were originally written in English and then translated into the other languages (cf. Murray 2012). Whereas this approach is commendable, since it establishes some form of standardization, it runs the risk of overlooking certain aspects of African languages which are essential for the purposes of facilitating the development of academic language registers in these languages. For example, literary artefacts such as folktales, praise poems and songs which are rich sources of specialised discourse or registers in these languages were completely marginalised in the national curriculum statement but are now reinstated in the CAPS. Gough (1999:171) regards folklore amongst the Xhosa, for instance, to be "traditional examples of secondary discourse types that include rhetoric employed in various ceremonies like releasing the widow, opening a homestead, traditional legal discourse, in praise poetry or even a folktale".

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this exploratory investigation was to review the literature on academic literacy with a view to develop an operational definition of academic literacy, its construct and its operationalization at Foundation Phase Level in South Africa.

The findings of this investigation clearly show that the term 'academic literacy' is not used in the national curriculum statement and CAPS documents. These documents only make reference to 'literacy' or 'emergent literacy' rather than academic literacy. However, the definition of the term 'literacy' in the NCS (2005) is similar to that of the term academic literacy. Accordingly, the NCS (2005)'s definition was adopted for this study.

The findings further show that there is no yet a clear academic literacy construct for the Foundation Phase in South Africa. The findings of this investigation unequivocally point to the need to develop an academic literacy construct suitable for the Foundation Phase level in

South Africa. The need for an academic literacy construct cannot be overemphasized as most teachers are not well trained in teaching academic literacy, and indeed may not be explicitly trained in this area at all. The problem with the NCS and CAPS documents is that they foreground the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing and an added skill of critical language awareness. The challenge with the four skills is that they are difficult to operationalize as they do not constitute a unitary construct. In most cases, each of these skills are taught as if it is a single activity, yet each of them requires differentiated abilities according to context. In most cases it proves impossible to teach these skills as isolated components. Thus, there is a need for an academic literacy construct which caters for differentiated abilities.

Furthermore, South Africa is a multilingual society which requires a pedagogy that embraces this reality. Much of the curriculum literature seems to point to a desire to effect an early exit from the majority of languages into English in most cases. While the usefulness of such a widespread international language is not in dispute, there seems to be a critical blind-spot in terms of policy around the usefulness of indigenous languages and the ability of a multilingual approach to engender academic literacy. Fundamental to a construct of multilingual academic literacy must be the acceptance that such academic literacy is a set of strategies for *using* language in particular contexts. Language *use* for various purposes must be a universal feature of languages, and the manner in which language can be used in the pursuit of academic goals should share more commonalities than differences across various languages.

Thus, the academic literacy 'construct' proposed in this study is differentiated and seeks to address formal and functional language competences. However, the operationalization of this construct poses a serious challenge. An attempt was made in this study to operationalize the proposed construct by drawing on some tasks or activities from the CAPS document, but these activities appear to be too many and can confuse teachers more if they are not rationalized. Thus, additional empirical research is needed to operationalize the proposed construct.

To operationalize the construct, there is also a need to investigate good practices from teachers in schools on how they are developing the different academic literacy competencies. Another area that requires further investigation is in respect to the language policy. Although the CAPS requires English to be introduced as an Additional language from Grade 1, there is

no pedagogical framework that provides how the language will be used in complementarity to learners Home Languages to promote transfer of academic literacy skills or competencies. It is the argument of this study that most of the academic literacy competencies identified under the proposed academic literacy 'construct' are transferable across languages. Multilingual learners can benefit greatly from an academic literacy 'construct' which is based on multilingual ability or the ability to use two or more languages in learning and teaching.

Crucially, however, while the proposed construct in this study identifies a collection of features that can be thought of as academic literacy, operationalization of such features is the vital missing piece of the puzzle. We must ask ourselves: How can these features be tested? How can they be taught? And at what level of schooling do they become salient? The literature is silent on such questions, and indeed they can only be answered through empirical work. Ultimately if such concepts can be rendered explicit and can be translated into pedagogy, teachers in South Africa will be given the tools that are required to build a truly multilingual and academically literate school population.

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Annexure 1.

Academic language 'construct' and its operationalization (derived from the CAPS)

ACADEMIC LITERACY COMPONENT/SKILL	TASKS	TRANSFERABLITY ACROSS LANGUAGES
1. Oral language	• 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 letter, full stop • 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	Transferable across languages

	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	
2. Sense of story and sequence	• Tells a familiar story which has a beginning, middle and end • Tells a short story with a simple plot and different characters	Transferable across languages
3. Concept of print	• Develops book handling skills (holding the book and turning pages correctly) • Interprets pictures to make up own story i.e. „reads" the pictures • Reads logos, labels and other words from environmental print • Recognises own name and names of peers • Reads labels and captions in the classroom • Develops basic concepts of print including • *Concept of a book • *Concept of words and letters *Directionality – Start reading at front, end at back; read from left to right and top to bottom of a page • Reads Big Books or other enlarged texts • Uses pictures and the book cover to predict what the story is about • • Discusses the story, identifying	Transferable across languages

	• Reads enlarged texts such as fiction and non-fiction big books, newspaper articles, plays, dialogues and electronic texts (computer texts) • Reads book and discusses the main idea, the characters, the „problem‟ in the story, the plot and the values in the text • Answers a range of higher order questions based on the passage read • Reads different poems on a topic • Uses visual cues to talk about a graphical text, e.g. advertisements, pictures, graphs, charts and maps • Finds and uses sources of information, e.g. community members, library books • Uses table of contents, index and page numbers to find information • Uses key words and headings to find information in non-fiction texts • Uses a dictionary to find new vocabulary and their meanings	
4. Phonics & Phonemic awareness	• Identifies letter–sound relationships of all single letters • Builds words using sounds learnt (e.g. words with. -at, -et, -it, -ot, -ut, -ag, e.g. -ig, -og, -ug, -an, -en, -in, -un, -am) • Uses consonant blends to build up and break down words (r and l blends) • Recognises common consonant digraphs at the beginning and end of a word, e.g. sh, ch and th • Recognises plurals („s‟ and „es‟) and word endings („ing‟ and „ed‟) aurally • Groups common words into sound families • Recognises consonant digraphs at the beginning and end of words (sh-, -sh, ch-, -ch, th-, -th and wh-) at the beginning and end of words • Recognises „silent e‟ or split digraphs in words (e.g. same, bite, note) • Recognises vowels such as -ere, -	Not transferable across languages in all cases – extent of transferability requires empirical study

	air, -are • Recognises and uses spelling patterns (e.g. -igh (high), -ough (tough), -eigh (neigh), -augh (caught) • Recognises and uses rhyming words (e.g. blow, flow, glow) • Recognises that some sounds can be represented by a number of different spelling choices, e.g. ow (cow) ou (found), aw (draw), au (autumn); t*ie*, h*igh*, sk*y;* f*ew*, bl*ue* • Recognises digraphs making /f/, e.g. „ph" as in elephant) • Recognises silent letters in words, i.e. „k", „l", „b" „w" • Recognises hard and soft sounds of „c" and „g" • Recognises and uses synonyms and antonyms • Recognises and uses prefixes such as un-, re-) and suffixes such as -ful, -ness) • Uses words that are pronounced and spelt the same but have different meanings (homophones) • Uses words that sound the same but are spelt differently • Builds 3, 4 and 5-letter words • Sorts letters and words in	
5. Vocabulary (concepts)	• Vocabulary teaching and learning assumed to be embedded other aspects	Conceptual understanding is transferable across languages

6. Comprehension	• Monitors self when reading, both in the area of word recognition and comprehension. • Shows an understanding of punctuation when reading aloud • Uses self-correcting strategies when reading • Monitors self when reading, both in the area of word recognition and comprehension • Uses diagrams and illustrations in text to increase understanding • Reads with increasing fluency, speed and expression	Transferable across languages
7. Fluency	• Decode accurately: being able to accurately identify the majority of words • • Recognise or get the words off the page quickly and effortlessly • • Read smoothly with appropriate phrasing and expression	Transferable across languages
8. Writing (handwriting)	• Practises holding and manipulating crayon and pencil • Develops directionality: left to right; and top to bottom • Develops hand–eye co-ordination by drawing patterns and tracing • Copies and writes own name, short words and sentences • Begins to write using drawings and copies letters, numbers, words and simple sentences • Forms lower and upper case letters correctly and fluently • Forms numerals correctly • Copies and writes short sentences correctly with correct spacing • Holds pencil and crayon correctly • *Transition to a joined script or cursive writing* • Uses handwriting tools effectively, e.g. pencil, eraser, ruler • Writes a sentence legibly and correctly in both the print script and the joined script or cursive writing	Transferable across languages

	• Forms all lower and upper-case letters in joined script or cursive writing • Writes short words in the joined script or cursive writing • Transcribes words and sentences correctly in the joined script or cursive writing • Makes transition to the joined script or cursive writing in all written recording (i.e. the date, own name; and own written texts) • Copies written text from the board, textbooks, work cards etc. correctly • Writes neatly and legibly with confidence and speed in a joined script or cursive writing • Experiments with using a pen for writing	
9. Grammar & use	Grammar is assumed to be embedded in all other aspects of the curriculum	Knowledge of grammar aspects is transferable across languages
10. Critical language awareness	Assumed to be embedded in all other aspects of the curriculum	Transferable across languages