



What's in the CAPS Package?
A Comparative study of the National Curriculum
Statement (NCS) and the Curriculum and
Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS): FET
Phase

English First Additional Language

June 2014
Jean Moore



The Research Team

Dr LG Bull - External Moderator for English FAL and SAL; was Deputy Chief Education Specialist for the Gauteng Education Department.

Prof L Makalela - Associate Professor and Deputy Head of the Division of Languages, Literacies & Literatures at the Wits School of Education.

Mrs N Nonkwelo - Deputy Chief Education Specialist for FET languages in the FET Curriculum Development and Support Directorate in the Gauteng Department of Education; and a member of the EFAL Post-exam Evaluation team.

Mrs P Voller - Specialist Coordinator: School Improvement at JET Education Services; She taught English Home Language (HL) and First Additional Language (FAL) in the Senior and FET phase for 20 years.

Ms N Zindela - lecturer in English Studies at UNISA (Applied English language studies; English for Specific Purposes and TESOL). She has taught English language and literature in Swaziland at high school and university. Examiner, marker and marker -trainer for the O'Level and Cambridge International Examinations.

Ms J Moore – FAL specialist at secondary and tertiary level; with a special interest in the development of academic literacy.

Context

- In 2013, just over 500 000 learners were entered for the matriculation examination.
- Of these, 454 666 wrote English FAL
- These matriculants, entering the workplace and tertiary educational institutions, will be expected to read, write, learn and communicate in English.
- It is therefore especially important that English FAL is designed to support this majority.

Features of English FAL

EFAL serves a diverse range of purposes:

- It attempts to be a discipline-based subject; preparing learners who wish to study English further;
- As the LOLT for most learners, it strives to ensure that learners are functionally literate and able to use English to study further in a range of fields.
- It has a broader socio-economic role.

EFAL's role in the FET Phase

- It should play a fundamental role.
- For most learners, it is the language of learning and teaching and the language in which they are assessed in all of their other subjects.
- Therefore, the English FAL curriculum needs to be particularly clearly articulated, in order to attempt to meet these complex and competing needs and roles.

Further layers of complexity

- English is not a true first additional language for many South African learners.
- Competing realities, roles and expectations around what English is *for* must be taken into account.
- Many learners do not enter the Phase with the expected literacy levels.
- Additional language acquisition is premised on the transfer of literacy skills from the home language – this cannot be safely assumed.

Curriculum Documentation and Design

The NCS:

- Cumbersome and not user-friendly.
- High levels of cognitive and reading ability were required.
- Lack of coherence was a concern.

The CAPS:

- Less bulky and more user-friendly.

BUT..

Discrepancies within the CAPS

- The CAPS has largely addressed the issue of discrepancies between documents, but discrepancies within the documents are now a concern.
- The CAPS has a number of serious discrepancies, particularly between the Overview and the Teaching Plans.

The CAPS in a multi-lingual society

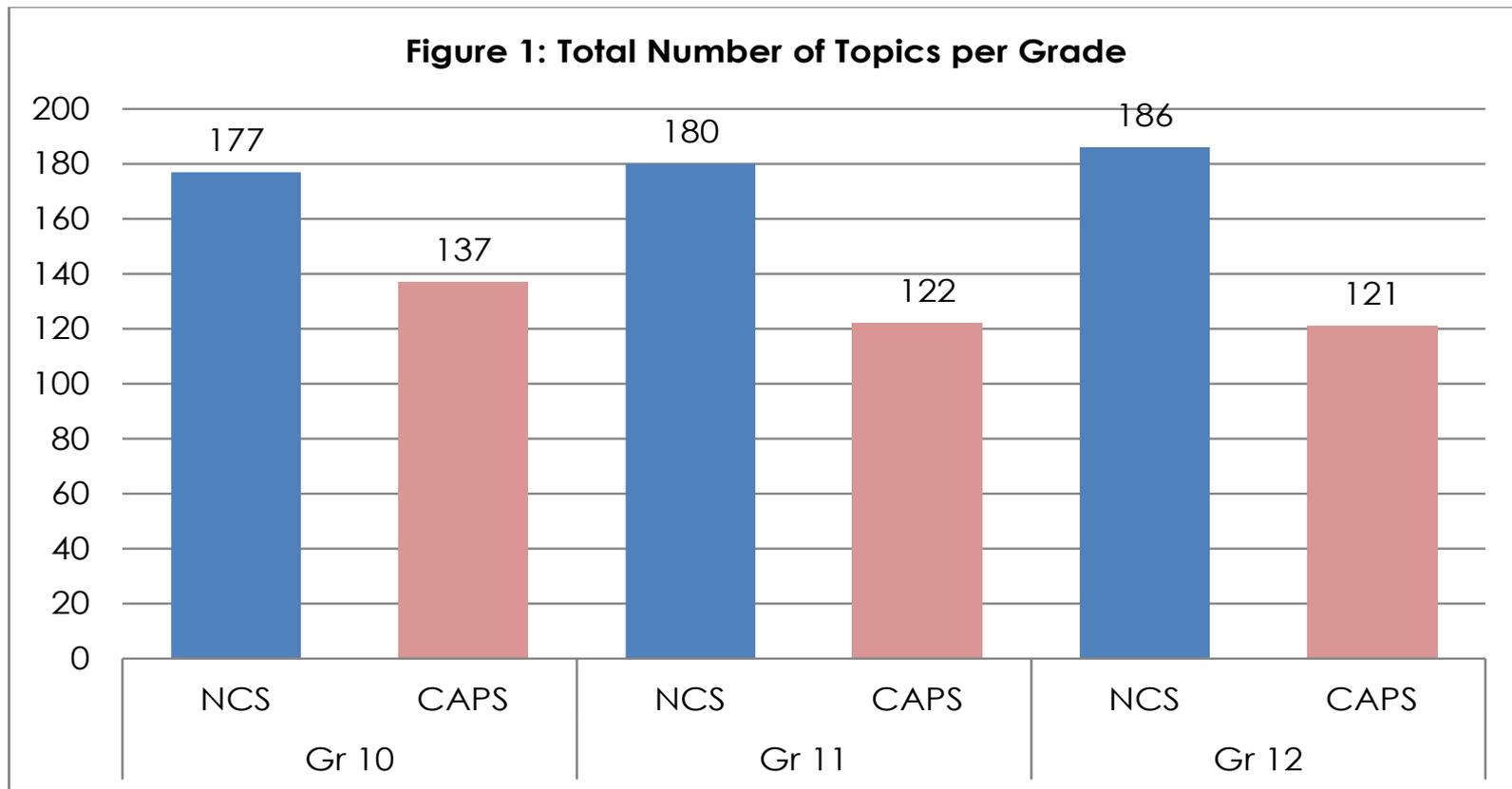
- The CAPS has removed the explicit recognition of the unequal status of languages and varieties.
- Current research emphasises the need for recognition of the role of antecedent language forms and varieties.
- The CAPS: outdated deficit approach? (Unlikely to support effective additional language acquisition.)

Topic Breadth: Disclaimer

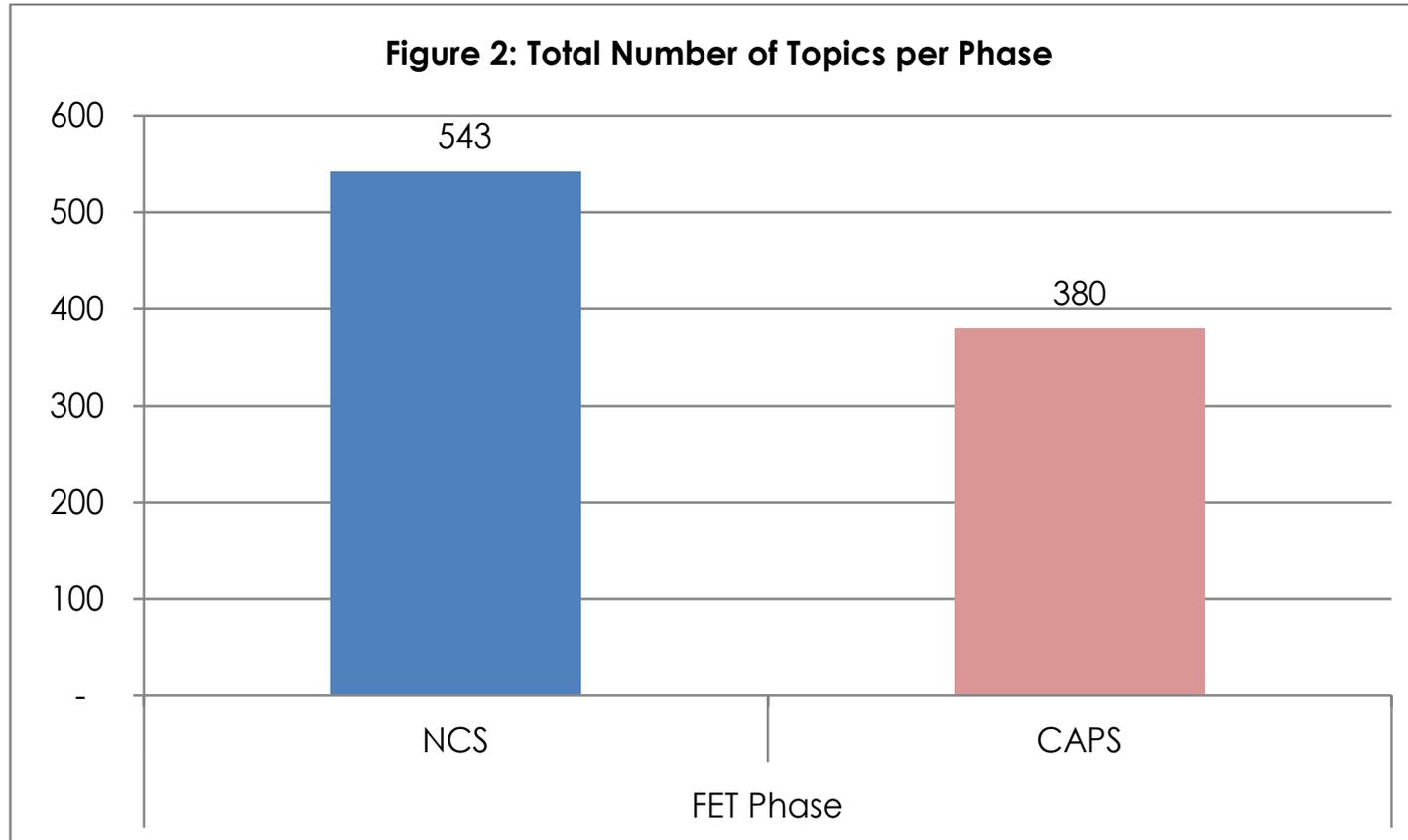
- Generating a comparative list of content topics across the NCS and the CAPS was challenging (as it is for any language vs content subject.)
- The CAPS Weekly teaching plans omit a significant chunk of the intended curriculum- but were compared to the whole NCS, which could be misleading.
- The team used the 4 broad topic organisers used in both curricula.

Relative Topic Breadth

The total number of topics per grade and phase is represented graphically in Figures 1 and 2 below:



Topic Breadth continued



Shifts in Listening and Speaking

- Overall, a slight reduction in breadth.
- More listening and reading tasks;
- Fewer productive communication experiences.
- Reproducing others' texts vs finding own voice
– minimal language and power / critical language awareness.
- Loss of home language/translation.

Shifts in Reading and Viewing

- Weighting has increased slightly: The CAPS (32,8%) from the NCS (28,1%)
- Generally appropriate though still too broad.
- Similar types of reading texts.
- Different approaches (The CAPS: genre-based; reading skills and strategies; the NCS: critical language awareness and critique.)

Shifts in Writing and Presenting

- Breadth is reduced though still too broad
- Strongly genre-based.
- Focus on pre, during and post-writing strategies.
- A number of task types specified in the overview and assessment guidelines are omitted in the teaching plans.

Shifts in Language Forms and Structures

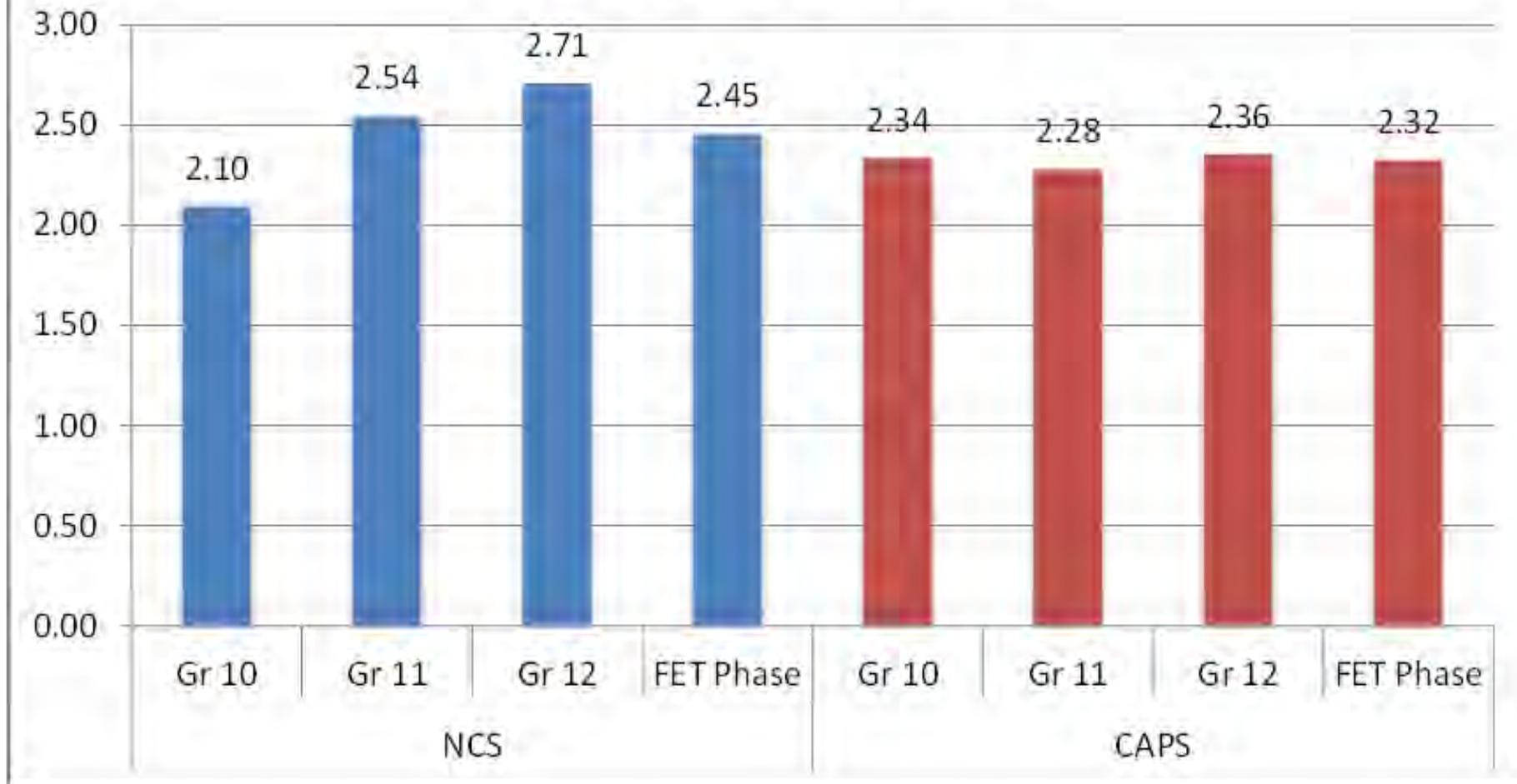
Two significant shifts:

- Implied meaning and connotation is not developed across the three years of the Phase (and not mentioned at all in the Grade 12 teaching plans)- a problematic omission.
- The role of first language is omitted in the CAPS, reflected in removal of translation and use of borrowed words. This contributes to the common sense perception that FAL is a watered-down HL.

Topic Depth: Disclaimer

- The CAPS offers almost no specification as to the expected depth of topics to be covered in each successive grade and no indication of progression across the Phase.
- Depth scores for the CAPS were therefore based on the research team's inferences from experience and assessment documents (and thus subjective).

Figure 3: Total Depth Score



Overall content/skills coverage

- Both curricula are very comprehensive; trying to prepare learners for a range of purposes.
- Both curricula are very broad and not sufficiently discipline-specific.
- For learners intending to study English at university, the curricula are not a good preparation.
- There is little evidence in the CAPS of English across other subjects.

Weekly teaching plans

- Much of the specified curriculum is omitted in these weekly plans that ostensibly map the entire curriculum over the three years.
- Certain topics are over-emphasised (active and passive voice; adjectives and adverbs; punctuation for direct and indirect speech.) These are encountered repeatedly in each year, with no obvious progression.
- Many transactional text types are omitted.
- Listening appears to be valued over speaking.
- Literature responses have been greatly reduced.

Curriculum weighting and emphasis

Table 23: Subject time allocation		
% time allocated in each curriculum, or n/a if topic is not covered		
	NCS	CAPS
Total classroom time (hours) allocated for English FAL in the Phase	4.5 / 29.5	4.5 / 27.5
% of total classroom time allocated for all subjects in the Phase	15.25	16.36

Table 24: Weighting per topic/emphasis within the subject		
% time allocated in each curriculum, or 0 if topic is not covered		
Central topics	NCS	CAPS
Listening and Speaking	time weighting not specified	10
Reading and Viewing	time weighting not specified	45
Writing and Presenting	time weighting not specified	35
Language	time weighting not specified	10

Curriculum Pacing

- The NCS offers no specification – teachers discern appropriate pace for their context.
- The CAPS is highly specified: 2-week cycles, which, if implemented, would lead to a very fast-paced curriculum.
- Omissions in the teaching plan suggest it is not possible to cover whole curriculum in the time stipulated.
- Remediation is specified but not allowed for, time-wise.

Sequencing and Progression

Table 27: Specification of sequencing

	NCS	CAPS
Level of specification (high/moderate/low)	Moderate/high	High (but the specification is not logical)
Rationale/justification	Curriculum content is ordered sequentially beginning with elementary and progressing to more sophisticated knowledge and skills. However, topics are not specified.	There is specification of content and skills however not always logically sequenced, for examples skimming and scanning are suggested for the first time in Grade 12

Table 28: Indication of progression – within and across grades

		NCS	CAPS
Within grades	Level of indication (strong/moderate/weak/none)	Strong	Weak
	Rationale/justification	Doc 1.2, p 45: Reflects progression within the grade – for example a Grade 10 learner is first required to recognise the difference between direct and implied meaning and progresses to recognising character/narrator viewpoint and finally recognising character/narrator socio-political background	Doc 2.1, p 53: In a ten week cycle, 8 weeks are devoted to Intense reading and there is no clear indication that the suggested text type becomes progressively more challenging.
Across grades	Level of indication (strong/moderate/weak/none)	Strong	Weak
	Rationale/justification	There is evidence of increasing complexity evident in the set of descriptors that indicate progression across grades.	Very little indication of increasing complexity across grades. Description in the teaching plan suggests a topic is taught to the same intensity in Grades 10 and 12 and may not be specified at all in Grade 11 as indicated in Table 21

Shifts in Assessment

- There are a reduced number of assessment tasks in the CAPS (10 tasks) as compared to the NCS (Grade 12 = 14 tasks; Grades 10 - 11 = 15 tasks).
- Both curricula are assessment-driven.
- In the CAPS, there is not always a clear correlation between what is taught and what is assessed.

Curriculum Integration

- The NCS has a clearer vision of subject integration compared to the CAPS.
- However, neither curricula make regular, explicit and consistent references to subject integration.
- This is of particular concern for a LOLT; with implications for broader student academic attainment.

Implications

There is a shift in assumptions about learners:

FAL learners have a weak command of English and thus need to receive more input across the three grade levels (the CAPS)

VS

FAL learners are thinking learners with a strong sense of who they are (NCS).

Implications continued

- Excess breadth leads to loss of depth and inappropriately fast pace; not optimal for developing competence in a language.
- Revision and remediation have been conflated.
- The CAPS seems to have lost sight of what “additional” means, and has aligned this curriculum too closely with the HL one.
- The CAPS appears to be based on conflicting assumptions about teacher expertise.

Exit Level Outcomes: Intended

The CAPS outcomes suggest that learners completing Grade 12 will be:

- fluent and competent users of the additional language, across a range of texts and contexts;
- able to write in a range of different modes; adapting their structure, style and diction for a variety of audiences and purposes.

A strong critical language awareness is also indicated: learners should be able to critique language use in their own and others' speaking and writing, and recognise bias, stereotyping and implied power relations.

Exit level outcomes: reality

- However, if one compares what is suggested in the teaching plans to these ideal outcomes, it becomes apparent that all of these outcomes are not going to be realised.
- Teaching plans are presented in the CAPS as ‘an example,’ but it is apparent that the majority of teachers are applying these weekly plans as they stand, without referring to the rest of the document. (Textbooks being used in the classroom are also based on these plans.)

Recommendations

- There is a pressing need to reduce the breadth of the curriculum. This, in turn, should facilitate the necessary slowing down of the pacing. The CAPS document should be rewritten to ensure steady progression across the three years of the Phase and to ensure that the depth of the curriculum is increased, incrementally, across the three years. There also needs to be progression within each year, from the first term to the fourth.

Integration and Separation

- As part of this rewrite, a consistent, explicit attempt should be made to make the curriculum genuinely integrated. The CAPS document should specify how and where this can be done.
- There is a case for separating English FAL into two subjects: One (optional) could focus on literature and prepare the learner for further study in English. The other (which should be compulsory) could focus more strongly on supporting the learner across the curriculum and assisting the learner to become a competent English user.

Revision, remediation and inclusion

- The CAPS should be very clear on the difference between revision and remediation. Time should be allocated for revision. Remedial elements, however, should be removed from the core curriculum and listed separately. (This would, in part, address the breadth issue.) Further, explicit guidance should be provided on how to remediate learners in the classroom and to facilitate inclusivity.

The weekly teaching plans

- The CAPS' weekly teaching plans are a potentially very useful resource, but at present are misleading, incoherent and lack detail. The teaching plans should be rewritten so that they comprehensively reflect the whole curriculum, and so that they progress coherently and logically. Depth must be specified and develop across the three years of the Phase. Furthermore, it is essential that the teaching plans and the rest of the CAPS document are coherent and articulate accurately.

Language structures

- The language section of the teaching plans should be thoroughly overhauled, so that this develops logically, shows progression and links items to be learned with the speaking, reading and writing tasks of that two-week cycle. Additional time should be allocated to language, so that teachers can do '*remedial grammar from learners' writing*' as specified each week on the teaching plan. Examples/lesson plans should be provided, to show teachers how to do this.

Authentic Communication

- The range of speaking and listening tasks should be revisited. The frequency of these tasks should be reduced, to slow down the pace. In terms of types of tasks, an attempt should be made to restore the learners' own voice and put them back at the centre of the curriculum: There should be less reading of others' texts and more production of learners' own, authentic oral texts.

Diversity, Access and CLA

- Variation in levels of FAL need to be appreciated and made apparent in the curriculum, taking into account diversity issues and access differences in South Africa. Critical language awareness should be developed more consistently and authentically across the three years of the Phase.

Create a strong FAL; not a weak HL

- Finally, from a more theoretical perspective, a sound additional language curriculum should remain underpinned by a socio-linguistic understanding of language acquisition.
- Issues like use of home language/multi-lingualism/language and power should not be side-lined as they currently are in the CAPS.