

CHAPTER 3

ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE

The following report should be read in conjunction with the English Home Language question papers of the November 2018 examinations.

3.1 PERFORMANCE TRENDS: PAPERS 1–3 (2018)

The tables and graphs below show that the general performance of candidates reflects a slight decline to that of 2017.

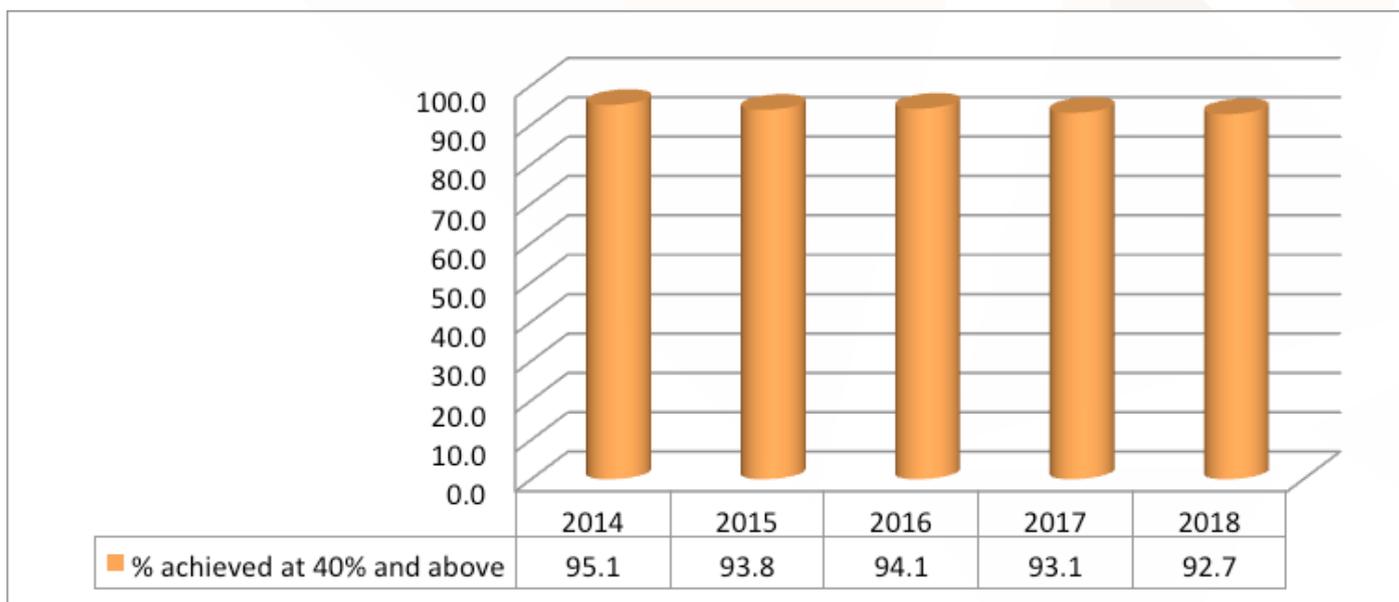
In 2018, the following features are noted:

- The number of candidates writing the subject increased by 872.
- The general achievement of candidates declined by 0.4% in 2018. This is indicated by 92,7% of candidates achieving at 40% and above in 2018, as opposed to 93,1% achieving at 40% and above in 2017.
- The number of candidates achieving between 80–89.9% increased by 0.3% in 2018.
- The general performance has also been fluctuating over the past five years, and this subject is yet to get back to the 95,1% achieved in 2014.

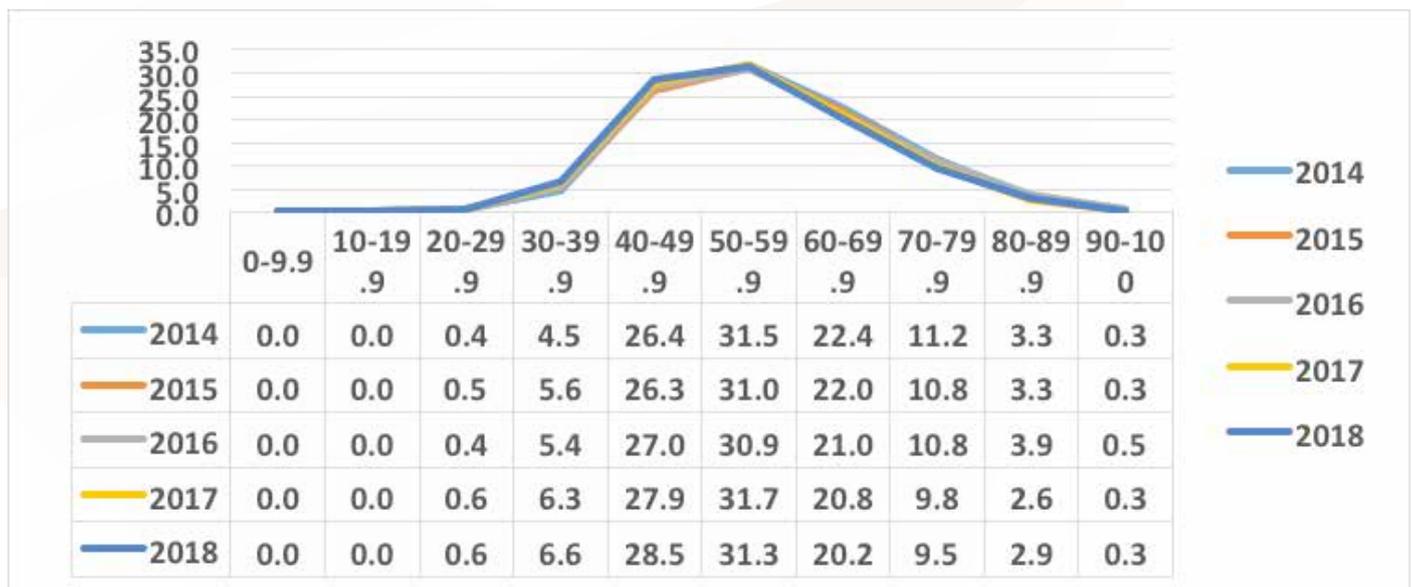
Table 3.1.1: Overall Achievement Rates in English Home Language

Year	No. wrote	No. achieved at 40% and above	% achieved at 40% and above
2014	105,480	100,279	95.1
2015	111,785	104,875	93.8
2016	107,967	101,610	94.1
2017	105,705	98,362	93.1
2018	106,577	98,823	92.7

Graph 3.1.1: Overall Achievement Rates in English Home Language



Graph 3.1.2: Performance Distribution Curves (English Home Language: 2014–2018)



3.2 OVERVIEW OF LEARNER PERFORMANCE IN PAPER 1

General Comments

- While there was a general improvement in the responses of the candidates compared to 2017, Q3 proved to be more challenging than in the past.
- Candidates who did not do well were unable to provide insight and failed to comprehend basic examination terminology.
- The candidates failed to grasp Greenpeace’s parody of the Shell advertisement as presented in TEXT E.
- The performance of candidates in Q5 remains a concern. It would appear that the teaching of basic language concepts was neglected in many centres, across the provinces.

3.3 ANALYSIS OF LEARNER PERFORMANCE IN PAPER 1

QUESTION 1: COMPREHENSION

Weaker candidates grappled with understanding the negative aspects of ‘materialism’; this concept should not be foreign to a Grade 12 candidate, and the term was exemplified in the text. In some instances, the language/vocabulary in the text was beyond the understanding of the weaker candidates. The majority of the candidates could not respond to questions that required critical thinking. Responses to higher-order questions were poorly constructed.

Common Errors and Misconceptions

- The vocabulary used in Q1.2 posed a challenge to many candidates. Candidates offered partial responses to this question. They did not discuss the concepts: ‘dwarfed’, ‘dehumanised’, ‘ownership has gone into reverse’.
- In Q1.5, many candidates did not provide the reasons for the writer’s use of the two distinct concepts, ‘consumers’ and ‘citizens’; instead they focused on defining the two terms.
- In Q1.6, candidates failed to understand what a *paradox* was, which led to candidates not responding to the question satisfactorily.

- d. In Q1.7, candidates failed to ‘comment critically’ on the *style* used in paragraph 8. They resorted to merely listing language conventions and were unable to critically discuss stylistic techniques.
- e. In Q1.9, the attitudes of the characters were not the focus of many responses. Candidates provided an explanation of the thought bubbles and offered literal responses which revealed a limited understanding of the question and a lack of analytical skills.
- f. Many candidates offered only a partial response to Q1.11. Reference was not made to the title and paragraph 1 of Text A. In addition, candidates were unable to scaffold their responses.

Suggestions for Improvement

- a. Teachers should use every available opportunity to expose learners to various texts to hone their comprehension skills. These should include visual texts, good verbal texts and even audio texts. If learners understand that not only the reading passage, but also the questions have to be understood, the quality of their responses would improve.
- b. The importance of the mark allocation should be emphasised so that learners are guided in terms of the length of their responses.
- c. Close adherence to instructions should be instilled in learners. Learners must be taught to decode what each instruction requires of them, for example ‘account for’/‘critically comment’/‘explain’/‘discuss’. A list of instructional verbs is found in both the CAPS document (p. 78) and the Examination Guidelines (pp. 29–31).
- d. Teachers should be aware that higher-order questions are scaffolded to accommodate lower cognitive responses. This means that a middle/higher-order question may have 1 or 2 marks allocated to lower-order responses.
- e. There should be a focus on building learners’ vocabulary. Learners should be encouraged and motivated to engage with good texts and, while doing so, to use dictionaries, thesauruses and other learning aids. There is not a single aspect of this question paper which will not benefit from such an exercise.
- f. Teachers who demonstrate and teach how to formulate opinions based on a given text, will be doing their learners a service as they will see a definite improvement in their marks for open-ended and opinion questions.
- g. The relatively weak responses to Q1.2 reflect that even basic level 1 and 2 skills are not being practised. This has an impact on performance as 40% of the questions are pitched at this level.
- h. Higher-order thinking skills must be taught. This will ensure that candidates will perform at a higher cognitive level in questions requiring these skills.
- i. Learners should be offered frequent opportunities to answer questions of the same complexity as those in the final examination. They should be familiar with the skill of analysing and responding to a question requiring more than a simple response. Responding to a question in its entirety must be taught.
- j. Answering questions that demand a discussion or critical comment needs to be taught and practised. Such questions might be better answered if the learner starts the answer with ‘I think that ...’.
- k. There is always the possibility that the reading passage in an examination will not be interesting to every candidate, or even that it will contain subject matter that might be unfamiliar to the candidate. It is, therefore, essential that teachers broaden the horizons of their learners by exposing them to a variety of reading materials, engaging in topical discussions and, perhaps most importantly, teaching them to utilise the reading passage when responding to the questions.

QUESTION 2: SUMMARY

- a. There was a marked improvement in the candidates' performances in the summary.
- b. In most cases, candidates adhered to the instruction to produce a coherent paragraph.

Common Errors and Misconceptions

- a. A few candidates neglected to cancel their rough drafts. This resulted in markers assessing both the rough and the final drafts.
- b. The number of words required was often exceeded and not acknowledged by the candidate.

Suggestions for Improvement

- a. The summary is an important aspect of learning and should be taught and practised. The curriculum requires this ability to summarise information from the early grades, and this skill should be honed by Grade 12.
- b. Learners must follow instructions carefully – no point-form summary should be presented. Teachers must prepare the learners to identify the necessary points and then write them in a neat, coherent paragraph.
- c. It is advisable that learners be taught to re-read the question each time they write down a point.
- d. It is important that learners are taught to use their own words when answering the summary. This skill can only be mastered with constant practice.

QUESTION 3: ANALYSING AN ADVERTISEMENT

This question proved to be more challenging than in the past. Candidates failed to grasp Greenpeace's parody of the Shell advertisement, as presented in TEXT E.

Common Errors and Misconceptions

- a. In Q3.3, candidates erroneously responded to both visuals instead of the visual reproduced in TEXT E. Therefore, their responses were of a comparative nature rather than a commentary on the 'appropriateness of the image' in the second advertisement. They also failed to see the link between the image and the text.
- b. In Q3.4, the comparative question presented the candidates with an opportunity to select the advertisement which had the greater impact on them. Despite being instructed to refer to both advertisements, many candidates only focused on their choice.

Suggestions for Improvement

- a. Teachers must train learners to read the questions carefully and learners must respond to every aspect of the question.
- b. Learners must be taught advertising techniques and how to apply them in answering questions, e.g. the link between the visual and the written text.
- c. The key instruction words such as 'what is the implication of the headline ...'/'Comment on ...'/'Justify your choice by making reference to both advertisements' need to be identified. These instructions expect more than a mere identification of text and visual.
- d. To discuss *impact*, they must be taught to ask '... so what?' after answering the question to see whether they have actually included the *impact* in their answer.
- e. The teaching of advertisements, in most cases, is theoretical in nature. Actual advertisements (all media) should be included in teaching this aspect of visual literacy. The purpose of this genre is to introduce and inculcate a critical awareness of a variety of texts.

QUESTION 4: ANALYSING A CARTOON

Candidates related to the cartoon and the questions were within the average candidates' capabilities. It was evident in this question that visual literacy was taught and that candidates were exposed to different types of cartoons and contexts.

Common Errors and Misconceptions

- Q4.2 required candidates to 'compare the boy's verbal responses to his sister in frames 4 and 7'. However, most candidates focused on the visual rather than the verbal responses of the boy.
- Q4.3 asked for *two* techniques. Several candidates merely listed the techniques without discussing how they depicted the attitude of the girl, as required by the question. Candidates confused body language and facial expression.
- In Q4.4, the majority of the candidates failed to provide meaningful responses as they did not offer a critical comment on the placement of the first frame. This resulted in candidates losing up to two marks for not applying this very important skill.

Suggestions for Improvement

- The questions must be read carefully and once answered, learners must reflect on whether all sections of the question have been covered.
- Teachers must make sure cartoon techniques, in their entirety, are taught and practised regularly. The impact and effectiveness of techniques used in visual literacy must be taught.
- Regular exposure to a variety of cartoons is not only an enjoyable way of teaching an abundance of skills, but it is also essential in equipping learners for the visual literacy section of the question paper.

QUESTION 5: LANGUAGE AND EDITING

This question remains a concern. Unfortunately, most candidates were unable to answer these questions satisfactorily. The only conclusion that could be drawn, was that many schools did not teach language concepts. There is an expectation that a Grade 12 candidate should know the following: punctuation, sentence structure, ambiguity, reported speech and other terminology, as clearly indicated in the CAPS document.

Common Errors and Misconceptions

- In Q5.3, many candidates did not know what a complex sentence was and often provided a compound sentence as a response.
- Q5.4 was one of the more challenging questions of the paper. Although candidates displayed knowledge of ambiguity, their responses did not clarify the ambiguity.
- Although direct and reported speech is taught from primary school, candidates failed to apply the rules of conversion from direct to reported speech in Q5.5.

Suggestions for Improvement

- The CAPS document conveniently lists the language structures and conventions which are to be taught. Teachers should utilise this and remember that regular practise in applying these skills is essential. Some basic skills should have been taught in earlier grades, but learners need to practise regularly to retain these skills.
- Learners should be exposed to texts with errors and be provided with guidance in how to correct the errors. This can be done both orally and in writing.

- c. Teachers must ensure that the jargon of the language paper does not become a stumbling block to the learners. This can be achieved by familiarising learners with the metalanguage of this section.
- d. When preparing learners for the final examination, teachers need to plan carefully and include frequent exercises and class tests to monitor the learners' progress and identify problem areas for remediation. This will yield good feedback to learners and impact positively on their results.
- e. Past question papers are useful revision tools, but they should not become a limiting or prescriptive source. Learners deserve to be given as many opportunities as possible to interact with texts from a broad range of sources.

3.4 OVERVIEW OF LEARNER PERFORMANCE IN PAPER 2

General Comments

- a. It would appear that a large number of candidates had only a cursory understanding of the prescribed texts. Candidates offered literal responses and were unable to engage on a figurative level with the texts. Some candidates even resorted to lifting from the poems and/or extracts in an attempt to respond to the questions. A growing number of candidates were unable to engage in a critical discussion of the texts when required to do so.
- b. There was an inability on the part of many candidates to respond to the questions' instructions, e.g. 'explain', 'comment on', etc. and there was a failure to respond to all aspects of the question in cases where the question required more than one aspect to be addressed. This contributed to the candidates' not being awarded the third mark in the contextual questions.
- c. Several candidates' responses in the contextual questions were unnecessarily lengthy. Generalised analyses or paraphrases were often provided. Succinct answers that respond to the specific requirements of the question are strongly recommended.
- d. Limited vocabulary and an inability to use language appropriately hampered many candidates' ability to express themselves effectively. Poor use of the apostrophe in particular, was noted this year.
- e. Thorough and critical engagement with the text under discussion is strongly recommended.
- f. Many candidates appeared to be reliant on study guides and previous years' marking guidelines, rather than their own reading of the prescribed text(s). Reliance on the film should be avoided as there are many discrepancies in plot and characterisation that compromise the candidates' ability to respond to the written text.
- g. Despite the fact that many essay responses were narrative in nature, there was a general improvement in the quality of the writing of the literary essay with fewer candidates writing single paragraphs or point-form essays.
- h. There were a fair number of candidates who possessed in-depth knowledge of and insight into the prescribed texts. Their responses were characterised by impressive language control, excellent vocabulary, mature thinking and sustained arguments.
- i. There are still some candidates who did not adhere to the instructions to answer two prescribed poems, one essay and one contextual question. These candidates either answered all four prescribed poems and two contextual questions, or they attempted to answer every question. The table of contents and checklist provided in the question paper should be used as a guide as to what to answer.

3.5 ANALYSIS OF LEARNER PERFORMANCE PER SECTION IN PAPER 2

SECTION A: POETRY

Common Errors and Misconceptions

- a. In responding to the poetry essay (Q1), many candidates resorted to paraphrasing and lifting instead of analysing the poem. In many cases, no reference was made to *diction, imagery and tone* and where reference was made to these aspects of the poem, they were poorly handled. There was poor understanding of how to explain the effect of a word (diction) or image in context and most candidates neglected to respond to tone at all. The style and structure of the poetry essay was generally poor.
- b. In the contextual questions (Q2, Q3 and Q4), most candidates failed to respond to the specific requirements of the questions. There appeared to be an inability to decode/interpret the question and to respond accordingly, e.g. in Q2.3 and Q3.3 most candidates failed to discuss the significance of the phrase/paradox, and in Q2.4, Q3.4 and Q4.4, tone was not addressed by the majority of candidates. Instructions to link a description to 'the context of the poem' (Q2.3 and Q3.2) were also largely ignored by candidates.
- c. In their responses, the majority of candidates did not focus on the lines referenced in the question, which meant that their responses were generalised and/or vague.
- d. Many candidates were unfamiliar with the finer aspects of the poems being examined and, in a few cases, it would appear that there was incorrect teaching of some poems. The meaning of words used in the prescribed poems was often not understood, e.g. 'corruption' in 'Remember' and 'bear' in 'An African Elegy'.
- e. Many candidates responded to the poems in a very literal manner with little or no understanding of the figurative meanings of the poems. There appeared to be an inability to deconstruct an image and discuss its effectiveness/significance.
- f. Questions that required an understanding of how the technical aspects of a poem have an impact on its meaning (Q2.1, Q4.1) were poorly answered.
- g. The Unseen Poem (Q5) appeared to be more accessible for the majority of candidates this year. However, responses were often vague and did not respond to the demands of the questions. It is evident that the skills of poetry analysis are not being transferred from the prescribed poetry to the unseen poem.
- h. In both the prescribed poetry and the unseen poem, it was distressing to note that many candidates did not appear to be familiar with basic literary terminology, such as *mood, tone* and *imagery*, or with the terminology used in the questions. At Grade 12 level candidates should have mastered these concepts.
- i. Another worrying trend is candidates' learning of responses from previous marking guidelines and then attempting to slot these responses into the questions posed in this year's question paper.

SECTIONS B AND C – NOVELS AND DRAMAS

Common Errors and Misconceptions

- a. Many candidates responded very poorly to the essay questions (Q6, Q8, Q10, Q12 and Q14). A superficial re-telling of the story was undertaken with very little attempt to analyse and interpret the question. Essays lacked critical discussion and often focussed on only one aspect of the question, e.g. in *Life of Pi*, 'faith' was addressed but not 'reason' and in *Othello*, the female characters' 'submissive' behaviour was addressed but not their immorality (or lack thereof).

- b. Very few candidates understood that a literary essay required the formulation and development of an argument. A thesis statement was missing in the introduction of many essays which meant that the argument lacked focus/direction. Many candidates seemed to assume that the repetition of key words from the question was all that was required to develop an argument. There was inadequate reference to the text to support the argument being developed.
- c. Many responses reflected a flawed and/or inaccurate understanding of the plot and characters of the novels and dramas.
- d. It was worrying to note the reliance by some candidates on pre-prepared essays, as well as the number of creative responses that were offered this year. Such responses are awarded 0/25.
- e. Many essays were written in a colloquial, chatty register which was inappropriate for the academic nature of a literary essay. Expressions such as 'now let's look at', 'sort of' and 'they hooked up' have no place in this type of essay.
- f. Overall, candidates' responses to the contextual questions (Q7, Q9, Q11, Q13 and Q15) were superficial and generalised. The specific requirements of the questions were ignored, e.g. Q7.8 and Q9.4 required candidates to relate events to 'the novel as a whole' but this was not done.
- g. Questions that required candidates to place an extract in context (Q7.1, Q9.5 and Q15.5) were poorly answered. Candidates included details from the extract or referred to events that happen after the extract; only events that led up to the extract are required.
- h. The line references that were provided in the questions, e.g. Q9.6, Q11.3 and Q13.3, which were meant to be the focus of the response were often ignored by the candidates.
- i. Many candidates appeared to be unfamiliar with instruction words such as 'account for' and 'critically discuss' despite this terminology being standard. Similarly, questions about irony (Q11.5 and Q13.7) and stage directions (Q11.7, Q13.6 and Q15.6) which have been standard questions over the past few years were very poorly answered.

Suggestions for Improvement

- a. Teachers should model their internal assessment tasks on previous years' papers in order to cover all the cognitive levels as set in these papers. It should be noted that some marks are allocated for lower-order responses within a middle or higher-order question.
- b. Learners should be exposed to past question papers so that they become familiar with the phrasing of questions and the standard expected in the NSC examinations. The Unseen Poems set in past papers for example, should be used as practice exercises.
- c. Learners must be taught to re-read the question and their response to ensure that they have responded sensibly and cogently to the requirements of the question.
- d. Teachers must guard against fanciful/inaccurate interpretations of the prescribed texts and learners must be discouraged from using the paper as a platform to espouse political or religious diatribes. Teachers should use more than one study guide so that a well-informed interpretation is provided to learners.
- e. Learners must be encouraged to develop a thorough knowledge of the texts they are studying. This will assist them to contextualise events/character behaviour/lines referenced in the contextual questions.
- f. Learners' critical thinking skills must be developed. These skills can be developed by asking learners to argue a point or defend an opinion. This approach should form part of the daily lesson plan so that learners can gain confidence in developing these skills in an informal, non-threatening forum. Teachers must give learners multiple opportunities to practise answering these types of questions.

- g. The meaning of words must be taught in the context in which they are used, e.g. 'bears', 'gladly' and 'dissembling'. The connotations of words must also be discussed so that learners understand the impact on the meaning of the text.
- h. Teachers should use the poetry and literary essay rubric to inform their teaching of the essay. Emphasis must be given to the structure of the essay (introduction, body and conclusion), as well as the appropriate register (formal) and language conventions (sentence construction and punctuation). Learners must write in the present tense and avoid using the first-person pronoun.
- i. The essay requires a focused and critical discussion. When writing a poetry essay, learners must be taught to discuss how specific words (diction) and images are used by the speaker to create a particular effect in relation to the set question. Learners must be taught to integrate succinct and pertinent quotes into their arguments. If learners are unable to quote accurately, they should rather provide a specific reference. However, learners should be discouraged from lifting quotes from the poem/extract simply for the sake of being able to quote.
- j. A thesis statement that responds to the question and positions the argument should be clearly stated in the introduction of a literary essay.
- k. The PEE/PEEL method of structuring an argument must be taught: make a *point* and support it with an *example* that is *evaluated* in relation to the question. Learners should not simply repeat the question at the end of each paragraph in an effort to create the impression that an argument has been developed. Instead, the statement and an example should be *linked* to the question to substantiate the argument.
- l. Learners must be taught that formal register must be used in the answering of this paper. Colloquial expressions are not appropriate under any circumstances. The correct spelling of characters' names is important, as is using the correct pronoun when referring to a character. Learners must also distinguish between the poet/author/playwright.
- m. The meaning of basic literary terms, such as *mood*, *tone*, *attitude* and *irony*, and how to discuss them in relation to the texts being studied should be taught from Grade 10. Teachers should compile a glossary of appropriate words to assist learners in expressing such concepts. Learners should be dissuaded from using generic terms such as 'negative', 'happy', 'sad', etc.
- n. The decoding of questions and how to link aspects of the questions must become a priority in the teaching of literature. The underlining of key words should be encouraged. Responses should be succinct and mark allocation should be used to determine the detail included in the response. A 3-mark question, for example, will require a well-developed response and critical insight.
- o. Learners must be taught that questions that ask them to 'critically comment on ...', require them to provide an evaluation and opinion over and above the meaning that is conveyed in the text.
- p. When engaging with the drama, teachers must teach the actual text rather than relying on summaries or watching the film version of the play. If learners are unfamiliar with the text, they are unable to contextualise the extracts or draw specific information required by the contextual questions. Learners must have a thorough knowledge of all characters and how they impact on the main character and the plot
- q. Stagecraft must be taught so that learners understand how to respond to a question about directorial choices/staging (Q11.7, Q13.6 and Q15.6). Learners must realise that *tone* is not the same as volume or pitch, and *body language* is not the same as action. The choices offered by learners must be specific and the justification that is provided must be appropriate in the context of the dialogue. All three elements of the question must be addressed.
- r. Learners must be taught that they are entitled to agree with some aspects of the question and disagree with others. A 'mixed response' is often the more appropriate response to a question.

3.6 OVERVIEW OF LEARNER PERFORMANCE IN PAPER 3

General Comments

- a. Teachers must emphasise that this paper carries the most marks and could make a significant difference to the candidates' results. The fact that the paper was written towards the end of the examination period might have created the misconception that it was not important.
- b. Candidates should have been encouraged to prepare well for this paper, as the skills and language structures used in the first two papers could be applied here with great success. In addition, the formal aspects of format should be taught and studied.
- c. The importance of analysing a topic or a set of instructions should be emphasised. Candidates were penalised if they responded only partially to a given topic, and it was often a result of candidates' neglecting to pay attention to every aspect of the topic.

3.7 ANALYSIS OF LEARNER PERFORMANCE IN PAPER 3

SECTION A: ESSAY

Common Errors and Misconceptions

- a. There were some candidates who focused solely on the 'marketplace' or the 'secrets' in Q1.1. The expectation was that the focus would be the 'secrets' of the marketplace. There were also a few candidates who did not understand the concept of a 'marketplace'.
- b. Some candidates failed to grasp the quotation in Q1.2 in its entirety. They chose instead to focus on selected aspects that appealed to them. A fair number of candidates described their own life experiences thus presenting a completely literal interpretation, or they used the first line of the quotation and wrote generally about life.
- c. In Q1.3, a small number of candidates saw 'mankind' as 'man' which resulted in restricted responses which sometimes bordered on gender issues.
- d. In Q1.4, a few candidates repeated the quotation but failed to allude to the challenge and how it was overcome. There was a tendency amongst weaker candidates to confuse the words 'possible' and 'impossible.'
- e. A concern in Q1.5 was that some candidates changed the word 'necessary' to 'unnecessary' and therefore lost the focus of the topic.
- f. A general tendency across all three visuals (Q1.6) was that some candidates presented a description of the visual as opposed to using the visual as a stimulus.
- g. In Q1.6.2, a few candidates focused only on the spectacles which resulted in generally average responses since candidates struggled to sustain a full-length essay.
- h. Q1.6.3 was not a popular choice but a few candidates wrote fragmented pieces on each of the aspects found in the visual.

Suggestions for Improvement

- a. Teachers need to use the preparatory examinations as teaching tools to discuss learner performance. Teachers must guide learners with regard to issues of time management and topic selection.
- b. Learners must be taught how to evaluate a topic in order to ascertain its requirements. This is essential in enabling learners to decode multi-layered topics and to plan appropriately.

- c. There should be compliance with the writing processes as set out in CAPS: process writing and sufficient writing of informal tasks (one piece per fortnight). The planning stage of the process is essential and the draft should be confined to the essentials. Editing should be an integral part of the writing process. If the draft and final copy of an essay are identical, the planning would not have served the required purpose. Learners must re-read their work and eliminate incoherence and other mistakes.
- d. A striking introduction and strong conclusion are hallmarks of good writing.
- e. Teach learners how to link their content to the topic. There is no need for learners to repeat the topic or adopt a debating style, such as 'I will be discussing ...'. Elements of structure, the use of topic sentences and the need for a logical flow of ideas from one paragraph to the other, must be reiterated.
- f. Learners should engage with more texts to improve their vocabulary and idiomatic language usage. Reading more books results in better writing.
- g. Do not provide learners with lists of clichés, platitudes and quotations. There is a tendency to use these excessively and this results in disjointed and 'inauthentic' writing.
- h. Coaching learners on examination techniques, e.g. identifying and focusing on keywords in questions so that answers are more relevant, must take place. Learners should also be encouraged to explore all the possibilities contained in a topic so that their writing is more original and authentic.
- i. Peer assessment is a valuable tool when applied in a focused manner. Make this a weekly activity in the classroom starting from Grade 10 or earlier.
- j. Learners must be discouraged from simply stringing together long lines of impressive vocabulary which add nothing to the meaning of the essay but which, in fact, obscure meaning and come across as contrived and convoluted.
- k. There has to be a direct and discernible link between the essay and the visual stimuli. Learners should address all the elements presented in the picture. Teachers should provide enough practice exercises for learners so that they are familiar with all aspects of this style.
- l. The aspects of creativity and originality often make the difference between a good and an excellent essay. Learners must be taught that their first idea may probably be everybody else's first idea and therefore, not original. Teaching learners to be original and creative in their writing is a challenge which teachers should embrace. Learners with limited language ability but who have a knack for thinking out of the box can earn some valuable marks. However, be sensitive to your average learner who might be more comfortable with what is familiar to his/her frame of reference instead of trying to force him/her to think 'out of the box.'
- m. Writing that has a sense of authenticity is usually more convincing. Advise learners to draw on their own experiences particularly if they struggle to rely on their imagination during examination conditions.
- n. Learners must be discouraged from mentally preparing a set piece for this examination and then trying to synchronise it with one of the topics.
- o. Concord, spelling, sentence construction and all other language skills must be taught, studied and used to improve writing. Writing can be further enhanced by using figurative language and rhetorical devices. Teaching of language structures ought to have commenced in primary school. This is a process and every opportunity to teach language structures needs to be utilised in the classroom.

SECTION B: LONGER TRANSACTIONAL PIECES

Common Errors and Misconceptions

- a. Elements of persuasion were generally lacking in many candidates' responses to Q2.1. Tone and register were not always appropriate especially considering that the audience was the Governing Body of the school. There was a tendency to write about languages in general without considering how languages should 'build bridges' and 'not create borders'. Elements of speech writing were ignored by some candidates. Ideas were largely unsubstantiated.
- b. In Q2.2, some candidates chose to congratulate the innovator without including the innovation. The writing either focused on the congratulatory aspect or the invitation. Candidates who took this approach were severely disadvantaged.
- c. Some responses to Q2.3 were presented as eulogies/newspaper reports/funeral notices. There was also a tendency to write a generic obituary and merely adding the information from the question. A fair number of candidates also wrote in the first person. Details pertaining to the extreme sport and the attempt to establish a new record were either ignored completely or mentioned only vaguely.
- d. Many candidates failed to make any reference to the dramatic change in fortune which was the crux of Q2.4. There was a tendency to provide unsubstantiated/inconclusive responses. The ability to ask pertinent questions was lacking.
- e. In Q2.5, some candidates failed to draw a link between the picture and the magazine article. A fair number of responses either described the photograph or provided an in-depth discussion of environmental issues and biographies of the photographer. The choice of register was also problematic.
- f. Many candidates failed to achieve the style required in Q2.6. There were candidates who addressed the Editor directly requesting him to take action. Of particular concern was that the topic, which focused on 'dishonest practices', was ignored.

Suggestions for Improvement

- a. Learners must answer TWO transactional pieces – this must be reiterated as this instruction was ignored in a few cases.
- b. Transactional writing should be included in the teaching programme every fortnight as per the *CAPS* prescripts. Practice is essential in the teaching of transactional writing. Even learners who are not skilful writers can do reasonably well in this section if they are familiar with the various categories of writing. Continuous informal practice writing will make a significant difference in the performance of learners.
- c. Teachers should assist learners in identifying and focusing on key words in questions. This will ensure that learners respond appropriately to all aspects of the question.
- d. Learners should be encouraged to add realistic, substantial details to their writing to make it more authentic.
- e. The register in SECTION B should match the intention and audience of the piece. For example, formal language is inappropriate in dialogues; it sounds unnatural and is stylistically ineffective. A dialogue should capture the feel of a conversation in real life, hence contractions and informal language are recommended. Other transactional pieces should also ideally imitate their real-life counterparts. Magazine articles, for example, are seldom written in a formal register. A formal letter, on the other hand, should have a business-like tone and objective style.
- f. Formats must be taught consistently and correctly and learners must be given opportunities to practise these genres.
- g. Teachers should familiarise learners with the descriptors on the marking rubrics. This will make them aware of how their writing will be assessed.

- h. Learners should be discouraged from determining in advance the choices they will make. It would appear that some learners are being trained, for example, to write the obituary. This seriously disadvantages learners who will then attempt to write the obituary even if they do not understand the topic.
- i. Teachers should teach grammatical conventions; ineffective punctuation, misuse of capital letters, concord errors, tense, etc. continue to mar the quality of writing being produced by learners.
- j. Subject advisors should arrange cluster meetings early in the year to mediate the writing rubrics with all teachers and to reinforce the importance of the teaching of writing skills. They should ensure that all teachers are following the teaching plans and that informal writing is being taught as per the *CAPS* prescripts. It is only when informal writing becomes a part of the weekly teaching in the classroom from Grade 10 that improvement will be noted.