

The national curriculum statement, *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*, says students should be able to engage with and enjoy language in all its varieties. They should be able to understand, respond to, and use oral, written and visual language effectively in a variety of contexts.

Language is broad and pervasive. It is at the heart of learning, life and cultures. Because it is central to intellectual, emotional and social development it has an essential role throughout the school curriculum. There is seldom a time or place in any learning area where it is not present.

Language and communication

A key purpose of language is communication. Through language we are able to communicate with others for a variety of purposes. Language allows us to share knowledge, experiences, information, feelings and ideas. It also helps us to examine our own and others' experiences and ideas and to give them meaning.



Communication through language involves connections and interactions between messages that are given and received. We produce messages by speaking, writing and presenting. We consume messages by listening, reading and viewing. The action of one dimension typically leads to responses in another.

Relationships within and beyond language as a learning area

Because language is essentially an interactive process, the oral, written and visual components are highly interrelated. Listening, for example, may require watching someone's body language to fully understand the overall communication. When listening to and watching a demonstration, or dramatic performance, there will often be visual elements that add important meaning to what is said and listened to. Listening and

viewing can be inseparable dimensions in the receiving and understanding of messages.

The idea of interrelationships is even greater when the components of language are applied throughout and beyond the curriculum. Much of the learning that takes place in mathematics or social studies, for example, is inescapably language dependent. Our day-to-day transactions of personal and social activity rely heavily on language and its communicative powers. For these reasons, society and schools have a major responsibility for giving students a good command of language and the ability to use it effectively to convey and understand meanings.

Characteristics within language components

Accepting the connections that exist within and beyond the components of language, it is recognised that there are particular skills that have special and distinctive relevance within each component. Effective listening, for example, requires abilities to obtain information and respond appropriately, to establish relationships and interact with others, and to reflect upon ideas, experiences and opinions. Viewing involves the development of such skills as recognising the interaction between words and images, and thinking critically about the intentions, effects and impact of visual messages.

Assessment of language components

One of the purposes of national monitoring is to find out and report on what students know and can do in relation to important learning outcomes. Since language and communication is an extensive domain, it requires organised treatment for assessment and reporting. Within the four-year programme of monitoring, the Project has chosen an arrangement that focuses on speaking and reading in one year, and listening, viewing and writing in another. On each occasion the emphasis is on understandings and skills that are particularly relevant within, and to some extent between, the respective components. This treatment of the language domain is not intended to suggest that each component represents a separate or isolated curricular experience, but rather to acknowledge the distinctive learning skills of each.

Listening and viewing

Children first encounter language and learn to use and interpret it in its oral and visual forms well before they commence formal education. The development of their language from quite basic beginnings through to more sophisticated constructions results from increasingly rich and complex opportunities and interactions in personal, social and cultural settings. These experiences lead to understandings about the meanings, effects and consequences of what is heard and seen, and help children gain greater control over their environment.

NEMP LISTENING FRAMEWORK

CENTRAL ORGANISING THEME

Constructing meaning from spoken messages and communications for a range of purposes

UNDERSTANDINGS

- Listening, speaking and thinking are interactive and interdependent.
- Listening can be passive or active.
- Comprehension of spoken messages is affected by the interests, purposes and background of the listener.
- Listeners are expected to follow social conventions which vary according to context.
- Different cultures have different conventions and expectations.
- Listening involves recognition and interpretation of non-verbal messages that accompany verbal communications.
- Active listening requires the listener to organise, analyse and relate content to previous knowledge.

PURPOSES

- Participating in conversation.
- Following a story.
- Obtaining information.
- Identifying opinions and viewpoints.
- Critical evaluation.
- Enjoyment and inspiration.
- Acquiring new language and understandings.

SKILLS

- Attending and concentrating.
- Recalling and retelling what others have said.
- Comprehending literal meaning.
- Identifying main ideas or themes.
- Summarising.
- Thinking critically.
- Distinguishing fact from opinion; recognising bias and prejudice.
- Making inferences.
- Drawing appropriate conclusions.
- Gauging mood and occasion.
- Knowing how and when to respond.
- Listening with empathy.
- Reading body language (smiles, nods, pauses).
- Exploring language and multiple meanings of messages.
- Relating unfamiliar words and phrases to context to derive meaning.

MOTIVATION

- Enjoyment from listening to a variety of sources.
- Awareness of the benefits of listening.
- Commitment to being a good listener.

NEMP VIEWING FRAMEWORK

CENTRAL ORGANISING THEME

Constructing meaning from visual texts

UNDERSTANDINGS

- Viewing is a complex thinking process which involves the integration of information from many sources.
- Visual messages are created to inform, persuade and entertain.
- Different messages and meanings can be drawn from a visual text.
- Responses to visual information can be critical or passive.
- Particular effects can be created by combining visual, aural and verbal elements.
- Visual effects are used to appeal to different moods, feelings, occasions and settings.

PURPOSES

- Following a story.
- Obtaining information.
- Identifying opinions and viewpoints.
- Critical evaluation.
- Enjoyment and inspiration.
- Acquiring visual language and understandings.

SKILLS

- Comprehending literal meaning.
- Interpreting symbolic elements.
- Recognising the interaction between words and images.
- Comparing written and visual versions of texts.
- Thinking critically about the intentions, effects and impact of visual messages.
- Identifying and analysing the techniques and conventions of visual language in a variety of contexts.
- Exploring ideas and multiple meanings.
- Recognising how visual texts are tailored to appeal to particular audiences.
- Reading body language.

MOTIVATION

- Enthusiasm for viewing and responding to a wide variety of visual information.
- Voluntary engagement with visual language.
- Commitment to exploring the meanings of visual messages.

Frameworks for national monitoring assessment

National monitoring task frameworks are developed with the Project's curriculum advisory panels. These frameworks have two key purposes. They provide a valuable guideline structure for the development and selection of tasks, and they bring into focus those important dimensions of the learning domains that are arguably the basis for valid analyses of students' skills, knowledge and understandings.

The assessment frameworks are organising tools that interrelate understandings with skills and processes. They are intended to be flexible and broad enough to encourage and enable the development of tasks that lead to meaningful descriptions of what students know and can do. They are also designed to help ensure a balanced representation of important learning outcomes.



The frameworks for listening and viewing have central organising themes supported by three interrelated aspects.

The listening theme, “constructing meaning from spoken messages and communications for a range of purposes”, and the viewing theme, “constructing

meaning from visual texts”, together endorse the close relationships between these two components of language. They also highlight the centrality and fundamental importance of active pursuit of meaning.

The *understandings* aspect of each framework summarises important ideas about the actions, impact and consequences of the ways in which messages might be shaped, communicated, interpreted and used.

The *purposes* aspect identifies some of the major contexts in which listening and viewing are applied.

The *skills* aspect lists key abilities that students could be expected to demonstrate while engaging in listening and viewing for particular purposes. The performance of these skills and processes is highly related to demonstrations of ideas listed in the understandings aspect.

The *motivation* aspect of the frameworks draws attention to the importance of having information about students' interests, attitudes, confidence and involvement in their listening and viewing activities, both within and beyond the school setting. Educational research and practice confirm the impact of student motivation and attitudes on progress and learning outcomes as an important adjunct to opportunities to learn.

The choice of tasks for national monitoring

The choice of tasks for national monitoring is guided by a number of educational and practical considerations. Uppermost in any decisions relating to the choice or administration of a task is the central consideration of validity and the effect that a whole range of decisions can have on this key attribute. Tasks are chosen because they provide a good representation of important knowledge and skills, but also because they meet a number of requirements to do with their administration and presentation. For example:

- ▮ Each task with its associated materials needs to be structured to ensure a high level of consistency in the way it is presented by specially trained teacher administrators to students of wide-ranging backgrounds and abilities, and in diverse settings throughout New Zealand.
- ▮ Tasks need to span the expected range of capabilities of year 4 and 8 students and to allow the most able students to show the extent of their abilities while also giving the least able the opportunity to show what they can do.
- ▮ Materials for tasks need to be sufficiently portable, economical, safe and within the handling capabilities of students. Task materials also need to have meaning for students.
- ▮ The time needed for completing an individual task has to be balanced against the total time available for all of the assessment tasks, without denying students sufficient opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities.
- ▮ Each task needs to be capable of sustaining the attention and effort of students if they are to produce responses that truly indicate what they know and can do. Since neither the student nor the school receives immediate or specific feedback on performance, the motivational potential of the assessment is critical.
- ▮ Tasks need to avoid unnecessary bias on the grounds of gender, culture or social background while accepting that it is appropriate to have tasks that reflect the interests of particular groups within the community.

Listening and viewing assessment tasks

Thirty-seven listening and viewing tasks were administered, using three different approaches. Twenty-five were administered in one-to-one interview settings, where instructions were presented orally and students used materials and visual or auditory information, often presented on laptop computers. Eleven tasks were attempted in a stations arrangement, where students worked independently on a series of tasks. The final task was administered using a paper-and-pencil approach in an “independent” session.



Twenty-seven of the thirty-seven tasks were the same for both year 4 and year 8. One task followed the same administration and marking procedures for both year 4 and year 8, but included fewer components for year 4 students. Two tasks were administered only to year 4 students, and seven tasks only to year 8 students.

Trend tasks

Ten of the tasks were used previously, entirely or in part, in the 1998 listening and viewing assessments. These were called *link tasks* in the 1998 report, but were not described in detail to avoid any distortions in the 2002 results that might have occurred if the tasks had been widely available for use in schools since 1998. In the current report, these tasks are called *trend tasks*, and are used to examine trends in student performance: whether they have improved, stayed constant or declined over the four-year period since the 1998 assessments.

Link tasks

To allow similar comparisons between the 2002 and 2006 assessments, 16 of the tasks used for the first time in 2002 have been designated *link tasks*. Results of student performance on these tasks are presented in this report, but the tasks are described only in general terms because they will be used again in 2006.

Marking methods

The students' responses were assessed using specially designed marking procedures. The marking criteria used had been developed in advance by Project staff, but were sometimes modified as a result of issues raised during the marking. Tasks that required marker judgement and were common to year 4 and year 8 were intermingled during marking sessions, with the goal of ensuring that the same scoring standards and procedures were used for both. Similarly, where the marking of trend tasks required substantial marker judgement, specially selected representative samples of the 1998 performances were re-marked, intermingled with the 2002 performances. This helped to ensure that the trend information would be trustworthy, unaffected by changes in marking standards between 1998 and 2002.

Task by task reporting

National monitoring assessment is reported task by task so that results can be understood in relation to what the students were asked to do.

Access tasks

Teachers and principals have expressed considerable interest in access to NEMP task materials and marking instructions, so that they can use them within their own schools.

Some are interested in comparing the performance of their own students to national results on some aspects of the curriculum, while others want to use tasks as models of good practice. Some would like to modify tasks to suit their own purposes, while others want to follow the original procedures as closely as possible. There is obvious merit in making available carefully developed tasks that are seen to be highly valid and useful for assessing student learning.

Some of the tasks in this report cannot be made available in this way. Link tasks must be saved for use in four years' time, and other tasks use copyright or expensive resources that cannot be duplicated by NEMP and provided economically to schools. There are also limitations on how precisely a school's administration and marking of tasks can mirror the ways that they are administered and marked by the Project. Nevertheless, a substantial number of tasks are suitable to duplicate for teachers and schools. In this report, these *access tasks* are identified with the symbol above, and can be purchased in a kit from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (P.O. Box 3237, Wellington 6000, New Zealand).

Teachers are also encouraged to use the NEMP web site (<http://nemp.otago.ac.nz>) to view video clips and listen to audio material associated with some of the tasks.

