Partners in Micro - Development

From Aspiration to Achievement: Addressing Critical Gaps in Sri Lanka's New Grade 6 English Syllabus Using the Science of Reading, the Science of Learning, and AI

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CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka's revised Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus (NIE 2025), released for training and comment in late 2025 and to be introduced in schools in 2027, reflects commendable goals in communication, learner engagement, and confidence building. Based on the Proposed English Language Curriculum for General Education System in Sri Lanka (NIE 2022), Grade 6 is positioned as a stabilisation and transition year from primary school, providing a bridge between primary communicative English and the academic demands of secondary school.

The Government is undertaking a review of the new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus before relaunch in 2027. Partners In Micro-development (PIMD) has been working in the field of English learning and teaching in Sri Lanka for more than 20 years, and more recently with a specific focus on evidence-based literacy instruction methods for English.[1] These methods are grounded in a significant body of cross-disciplinary research in the Science of Reading (SoR) and the Science of Learning (SoL).

In a report published in 2024 (Vaughan 2024) PIMD critiqued the primary grade English curriculum within the NIE's Proposed English Language Curriculum (NIE 2022). That report identified a significant foundational literacy skills gap and showed how it could be addressed in implementation for primary grades. This follow-up report extends that analysis to the new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus, evaluating it against both SoR and SoL concepts and related evidence-based instructional best practice.

1.2 SCIENCE OF *READING* ALIGNMENT

SoR is a body of multi-disciplinary research from the fields of cognitive science, neuroscience, psychology, and education, into "how the reading brain works and how we learn to recognize words" (Shanahan 2020:4). The SoR evidence base on instruction is a body of applied, empirical research that provides guidance on instructional practices that are "beneficial in improving reading ability" and training the reading brain (Shanahan 2020:7).

Competencies, expressed as "can do" statements and learning outcomes, require knowledge and skill as a foundation. SoR research has established that to read fluently with understanding in English and other alphabetic languages[2], students must be explicitly taught both constrained skills (phonics and decoding) and unconstrained skills (vocabulary, syntax, and inference).[3]

The new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus are based on a set of assumptions that are not supported by the SoR evidence-base. These syllabi assume incorrectly that: basic constrained reading skills (phonics and decoding for word recognition) are already secure from primary schooling; spelling and grammar will self-correct through use; unconstrained skills for language comprehension (vocabulary, syntax awareness, inference making) will expand through exposure without explicit

[1] PIMD currently offers free online teacher training in evidence-based literacy instruction in partnership with the University of Jaffna, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, and University of Colombo. See https://microdevpartners.org/teacher-training/ .

[2] An alphabetic language is one where the written form of the language represents sound. Tamil and Sinhala are alphabetic languages. Mandarin is not.

[3] Constrained reading skills are finite, teachable to mastery, and do not continue developing indefinitely, principally phonological awareness, phonics, and decoding. Contrasted with unconstrained skills such as language comprehension which continue to develop.

instruction; and reading comprehension can develop without achieving a pre-requisite level of word recognition skills.

These assumptions are directly contradicted by decades of research now embedded in policy, legislation, and school funding criteria across the English-speaking world and beyond.[4]

The new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus is broadly consistent with the 2022 Proposed English Language Curriculum with one significant exception. The 2022 document contains Content Grids with detailed specification of content for each competency. This includes specification of vocabulary tiers and linguistic competences by grade. Those grids specify Tier 2 general, cross-domain academic vocabulary development from as early as Grade 3. But the new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus make no reference to vocabulary tiers, and its learning activities and assessment provide no instruction to develop Tier 2 vocabulary.

This is not a minor gap. Tier 2 vocabulary, cross-domain words like *analyse*, *significant*, *sequence*, *compare,* is the language of schooling across every subject. Students who do not acquire it in secondary school will be unable to access academic texts which utilise domain specific Tier 3 vocabulary, follow subject-specific instruction, or succeed in English-medium tertiary study. Delaying this development compounds the lexical gap in linguistic competence at every subsequent grade.

The urgency of Tier 2 vocabulary instruction from Grade 3 - as the 2022 Proposed English Language Curriculum specifies - is sharpened considerably by the imperative to incorporate AI literacy into the school curriculum. On 1 April 2026, India's Ministry of Education released its new compulsory curriculum for Grades 3-8 on "Computational Thinking and Artificial Intelligence" (PIB 2026). The policy is explicitly staged: primary grades focus on computational thinking (logical reasoning, pattern recognition, problem decomposition) to build the conceptual foundations that an explicit AI curriculum in secondary grades will require. This is precisely the logic that the P21 framework (referenced in the Sri Lankan new Grade 6 English Teacher's Guide) invokes when it positions critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving as the skills a knowledge economy demands (NIE 2025:8-13).

AI literacy, in any productive sense, is entirely dependent on Tier 2 vocabulary. To prompt an AI tool effectively, a student must command words like *analyse, summarise, evaluate, criteria, relevant,* and *context*. To assess AI output critically, they need *accurate, appropriate, bias, assumption,* and *implication*. To communicate about AI use in academic or professional settings requires the general academic register that Tier 2 vocabulary constitutes. A student operating only in Tier 1 can consume AI output passively but cannot use AI as a tool for thinking, learning, or production.

Sri Lanka's 2022 curriculum was right to begin Tier 2 vocabulary instruction at Grade 3 and Tier 3 from Grade 8. The 2025 Teachers' Guide's failure to operationalise that trajectory not only widens the existing literacy gap, but it also places Sri Lankan students at a structural disadvantage in precisely the domain that India, China, South Korea, Singapore, and others are now treating as foundational to economic participation and growth.

[4] In the UK, the policy shift occurred in 2010 after the publication of The Rose Report (Rose 2006) and is now fully implemented in policy and curriculum (Department of Education, UK 2021). In the USA and in other countries, policy and curriculum has been shaped by the National Reading Panel report in 2000 (National Reading Panel 2000), a US Congressional initiative. As of the time of writing, 40 US States have passed legislation mandating literacy instruction based on SoR, and on 17 March 2026, the US Congress passed The Science of Reading Act which prioritises Federal funding for States and Districts that are aligned with SoR. In Australia, SoR based instruction is embedded in the curriculum in all states and Federal funding for schools is partially conditional on it implementation (Hayward, Stobart 2023;Literacy Hub 2024). In Canada The Right to Read Inquiry (Ontario Human Rights Commission 2022) paved the way for policy and curriculum change in Canada. Phonics also forms part of the English curriculum in Singapore and Malaysia.

1.3 SCIENCE OF *LEARNING* ALIGNMENT

SoL is the science of how students learn and the implications for instructional practice. As with SoR, the research and instructional evidence base is cross-disciplinary drawing on cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and education psychology. A core component of SoL is cognitive load theory (Sweller 2016) that explains the relationship between working memory and long-term memory in the learning process. Cognitive load theory shows that novice learners in any knowledge area learn differently to experts. This has implications for instructional sequencing, when to use explicit instruction vs discovery based learning, and the role of spaced retrieval practice in consolidating new learning in long-term memory. (Jha 2024)

The new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus is explicitly aligned with 21st century competencies and socio-emotional development (NIE 2025:8–13). It strongly favours constructivist approaches to learning such as discovery-based learning, creative production, and collaboration. This reflects a progressive education philosophy with roots in the 19th and early 20th centuries, a tradition that rejected rote learning and memorisation in favour of student-led discovery, project work, and experiential learning.

These instincts are not wrong. The problem is that progressive education advocates leapt from a legitimate critique of rote instruction[5] directly to a discovery-based classroom model without engaging the substantial body of cognitive science evidence that has accumulated over the past five decades. The constructivist classroom is based on the pedagogical assumption that the same instructional approach works equally well for expert and novice learners. This assumption is directly contradicted by the research and evidence base. Cognitive science is unambiguous: novice learners, that is, students encountering new knowledge for the first time, do not learn effectively through discovery. They require explicit instruction, worked examples, guided practice, and structured retrieval before independent application becomes productive.

The new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus fail to make this critical distinction between novice and expert learners. This can be seen in the Implementation Guidelines (NIE 2025:44-45), lesson procedures, and Modules.

The broader concern is that this issue may not be unique to the Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus. The same philosophy appears to be driving the broader curriculum reform across subjects and grades. The evaluation framework and SoL recommendations in this report apply to any subject syllabus built on the same pedagogical assumptions. This report therefore also advocates that the NIE apply the SoL lens to other subject curriculum and syllabi in development, across all grades.

1.4 RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE RETROFIT OPPORTUNITY

The critique in this report is extensive, but the remedies are pragmatic. The one-year delay before the 2027 implementation for Grade 6 English is not a setback. It is an opportunity. PIMD does not recommend rewriting the Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus. What is required is a targeted retrofit that can be developed and piloted without altering stated curriculum goals, revising student texts, or disrupting the implementation schedule.

This report demonstrates that AI, specifically Claude (Anthropic),can substantially accelerate this work. We have used AI to analyse all thirty lessons across the three Term 1 modules against an SoR/SoL evaluation framework, to model what improved lesson procedures look like, and to draft

[5] In the Sri Lankan context this is also partly a response to an exam-driven education system which the education reforms aim to shift.

revised implementation guidance. Work that would previously have required months of expert consultation can now be completed in weeks.

This report makes three specific recommendations in relation to the new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus:

1. Retrofit a parallel literacy foundations strand of 10–15 minutes per day targeting phonics and decoding for students whose constrained skills remain insecure at Grade 6, alongside structured oral reading fluency practice. This strand runs alongside existing modules without replacing them and requires no textbook revision.
2. Retrofit an explicit Tier 2 vocabulary instruction layer into existing lessons. This does not require new texts. It requires upgraded teacher language, short supplementary bridge passages attached to existing module topics, and a restructured vocabulary journal that produces active word use rather than passive recording.
3. Retrofit a SoL-aligned instructional architecture into lesson procedures: an explicit instruction opener before discovery tasks (I Do–We Do–You Do), a module-thread retrieval loop at the start of each lesson to convert the existing interleaved schedule into genuine spaced practice, and a cross-module consolidation routine. Specific feedback and cognitive load protocols are required to prevent error fossilisation.

Detailed implementation guidance for all three recommendations is provided in Appendices C and D.

However, these recommendations only address Grade 6. The recommendation made previously by Vaughan (2024) in respect of foundational literacy skills retrofit to the primary grades English curriculum and syllabi should also be incorporated as integral components of the new primary grade English syllabi, yet to be published. In addition, the Content Grids from the 2022 Proposed English Curriculum for General Education (NIE 2022) containing vocabulary Tier progression should also be incorporated into new English syllabi across all grades.

1.5 Equity Implications

The issues raised in this report are not only pedagogical. They are matters of equity. English functions as a gatekeeping language for tertiary admission and post-school employment in Sri Lanka. Students who arrive at university without the academic reading skills required for English-medium study are structurally disadvantaged, and that disadvantage falls disproportionately on students from rural schools, under-resourced communities, and families who cannot supplement inadequate instruction with private tuition. A syllabus that relies on discovery-based learning to close a literacy gap does not serve all students equally. It serves students who already have the language resources to learn from exposure. For the students who do not, it guarantees that the gap widens.

1.6 Report Structure

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 provides an overview of the core concepts of SoR and SoL, and implications for instructional design.
- Chapter 3 evaluates the new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus in terms of alignment with SoR and SoL principles.
- Chapter 4 illustrates the alignment issues raised in Chapter 3 by applying a rubric based set of evaluation criteria to three sample lessons taken from each of the Term 1 Modules. This is

consistent with the comprehensive evaluation of 27 lessons from Modules 1-3 documented in Appendix B.

- Chapter 5 recommends a strategy for realignment that can be retrofitted and implemented without slowing down the reform process. This is supported by more detailed specification of curriculum and syllabus changes in Appendices C and D and an estimate in Appendix E of the amount of effort and time to apply the retrofit using AI.

2 CORE CONCEPTS

SoR and SoL are related bodies of multidisciplinary research in how students learn (SoL) and specifically how they learn to read (SoR). Applied, empirical research based on the science has further provided a large and widely accepted body of evidence as to why some instructional practices are more effective than others (AERO 2023). These evidence-based instructional practices and the underlying research are summarised below and form the basis for the syllabus evaluation that follows in Chapter 3.

2.1 THE SCIENCE OF READING (SOR)

Evidence-based research in SOR has clearly established that skilled reading depends on two related skill sets: word recognition and language comprehension. The Simple View of Reading (SVR) (Gough & Tunmer 1986) shown in Figure 1 captures this relationship in a framework that shows the process of moving from novice to competent reader and the significance of oral language to reading and writing.

Dehaene (2010) provides a comprehensive explanation, based on neuroscience, of what happens in our brain when we read and how we train our brain to read. Oral language is innate and we naturally and automatically develop an ability to communicate orally from the moment we are born. However, the printed form of language was developed by man and so our brains need to be trained – circuits re-wired – to understand the relationship between sounds that we hear and what we see encoded in print form in text.

As you read this sentence you are hearing sound in your head. You are decoding the individual letters in word, not into letter names, but into sounds which you blend together. This then enables you to read the word (hear it correctly) and find the meaning in your mental dictionary (recognise the word) because you have heard it in speech. The speed with which you perform this decoding from print to sound increases to the point of automaticity, the more you read and communicate orally in a language.

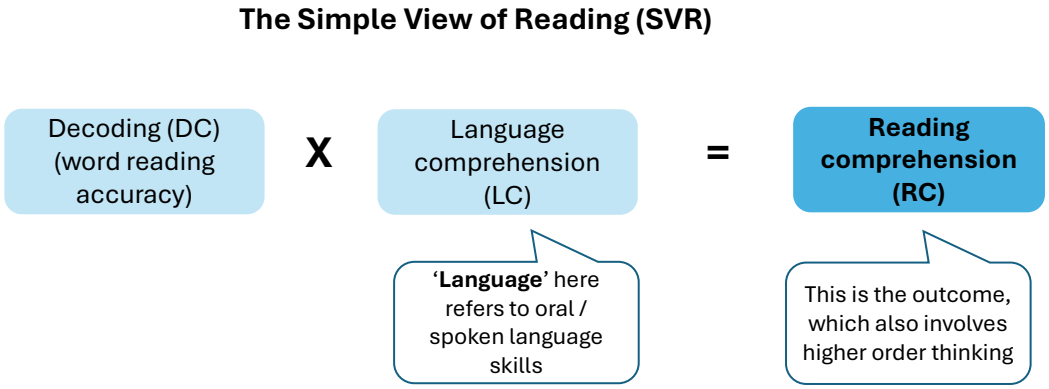

Figure 1 The Simple View of Reading (SVR)

In this section we provide an overview of the skills required for accurate word reading and word recognition, and those required for language comprehension as shown in Scarborough's (2001) reading rope (Figure 2). We also discuss in more detail an aspect of language comprehension – lexical competence.

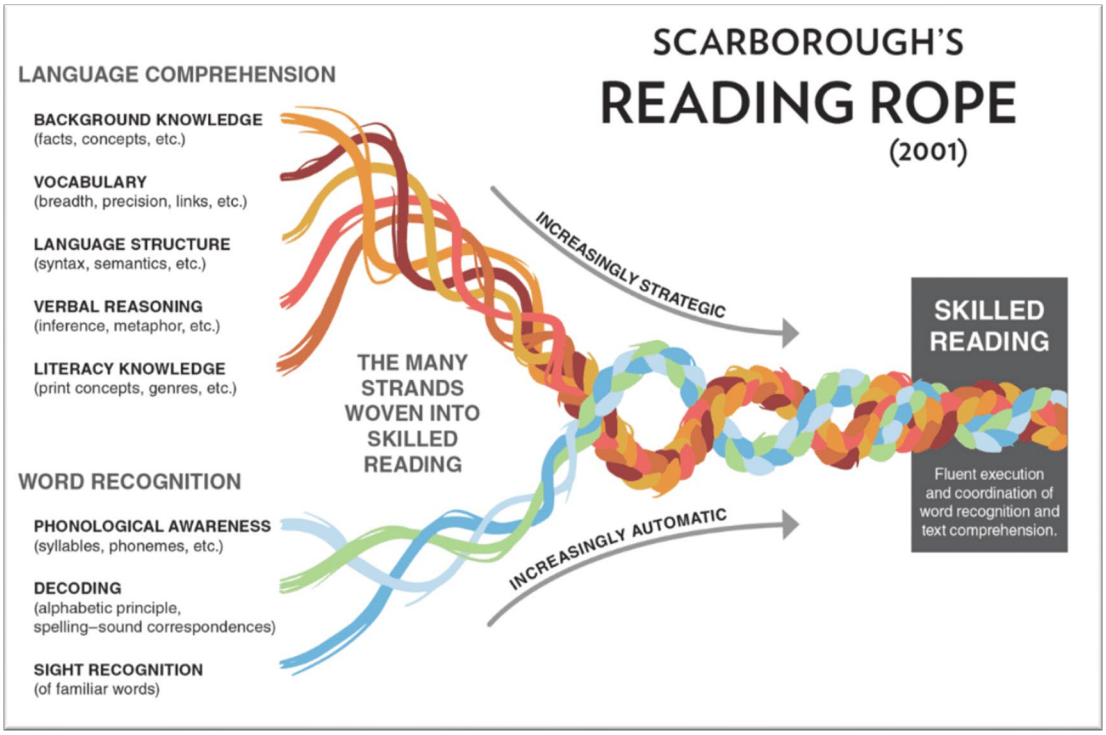

Figure 2 Scarborough's Reading Rope - Literacy Foundations for Skilled Reading

2.1.1 Word reading and word recognition

Constrained skills relating to word recognition, as described above, must be taught systematically and explicitly as a foundation for reading. Students first develop phonological awareness at the individual phoneme level through oral language usages before learning the corresponding grapheme (written representations) of each sound. In the English alphabetic code, there are 44 sounds but 250 possible combinations of sounds and letters (or letter combinations). It is knowledge of the code and the skill of decoding from print to speech that is critical for word recognition.

The SoR evidence-base has firmly established that word reading skills – phonics and decoding - must be taught systematically and explicitly following a logical scope and sequence of sound/symbol pairs. "Systematic and explicit phonics instruction produces the best performance in reading skills and competencies." (Fletcher & Lyon 1998, Lyon 2023, Moats 2020)

Systematic means:

- Phoneme-grapheme relationships are taught in a defined, logical sequence as part of a foundation program (~8 weeks) before students start to read.
- Learning begins with simple codes (e.g., single letter graphemes) and moves to more complex codes as students master each level of complexity or group of codes.
- Teaching and learning builds on what is already known at each stage.
- Gradually introduce words for students to segment and blend together (decode / encode) using only the codes they have learnt.
- During the foundation phase use only decodable texts. Then progress to connected texts.

Explicit means:

- The teacher explains the alphabetic code clearly and directly, demonstrates their use, guides the students in practice, and supports students in independent exercises.
- Children learn phoneme-grapheme relationships explicitly. They do not simply 'infer' from exposure to written language.
- They learn the patterns and rules so they can read on their own.

Word recognition skills are a pre-requisite for reading comprehension. There are two further important points to make about this relationship.

- First, "when children become competent at decoding, it is their competence in language comprehension that will determine their overall reading ability. So, in more advanced reading, good language comprehension will be more crucial than word recognition." (Oakhill, Cain & Elbro 2015:4) .
- Second, "if decoding and word recognition skills fall below a threshold, comprehension becomes virtually impossible" (Wang et al. 2024:1)[6] . In everyday classroom situations, phonics screening is undertaken at critical stages using context specific tools to identify students who may be at risk of falling behind.[7]

2.1.2 Language comprehension

Unconstrained language comprehension skills are also taught explicitly and intentionally before, during and after reading but these are unconstrained in that they continue to develop over time.

Language comprehension skills must also be taught explicitly and intentionally as part of reading instruction. This means that:

- a student's background knowledge should be explicitly activated before reading and new knowledge consolidated through post-reading activities;
- essential vocabulary should be explicitly taught before reading and new vocabulary knowledge expanded in depth after reading through detailed semantic mapping covering all linguistic aspects of the word;
- teachers should draw attention to syntax and syntax markers such as pronouns and connectives to raise students' awareness of syntax so they can understand meaning at sentence level;
- and comprehension questions and other activities should students ability to infer meaning again drawing on their background knowledge and experience to go beyond what is stated in the text.

There is a causal relationship between the word reading and language comprehension skills as shown in Figure 3. Phonics knowledge and decoding enable the reader to recognise a word and the more they

[6] Wang et al. (2024:15, 20) also concluded from their research that students who fell below a decoding threshold (defined by their research instrument and data analysis) developed their decoding skills more slowly thereafter, as well as other reading skills. This is because "successful decoding provides the developing reader with opportunities to learn the spelling-meaning connection of new words." (p.20)

[7] See for example the NSW Government Year 1 Phonics Screening Check (https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/literacy-and-numeracy/assessment-resources/phonics-screening-check) or the UK Government Phonics Screening Check (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-screening-check-2025-materials). BPST-III (Right to Read 2024) is a tool that can be used for older students from Grade 4 and up. For phonological awareness the PAST Test (PAST 2024) is simple and comprehensive to administer.

read, the more automatic this process becomes. Automaticity improves fluency which in turn assists with comprehension. However, fluency is also a function of language comprehension. [8]

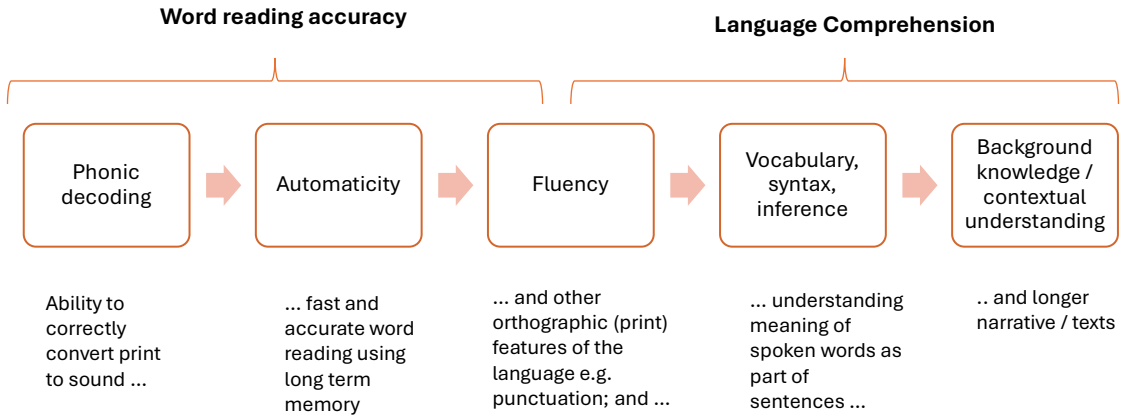

Figure 3 Causal links between reading skills

2.1.3 The 'lexical bar' and lexical competence

A related concept is the 'lexical bar' (Corson 1985). I am introducing this here because it goes to a major systemic weakness in the new syllabus. The lexical bar refers to the threshold at which a learner can read unfamiliar academic texts independently, infer the meaning of new vocabulary from context and morphology, process dense noun phrases and abstract concepts, use academic verbs and connectors accurately in speech and writing, and learn new subject content *through* English with minimal language mediation. As Beck et al. (2013:24) note, drawing on Corson (1985):

> "a barrier exists between everyday meaning systems — the words in conversations — and the meaning system created by academic, literate culture, or book language. Academic success is possible only if learners cross the lexical bar."

Crossing the lexical bar is not defined by conversational fluency, success in school English examinations, or the ability to memorise definitions. It requires strong productive and receptive *control* of Tier 2 (general academic) vocabulary, sufficient reading fluency for extended text, and the ability to infer and integrate new Tier 3 (discipline-specific) vocabulary when it is encountered.

The stakes of this threshold for Sri Lankan students are structural. Most students complete schooling in Sinhala or Tamil medium and encounter English-medium instruction for the first time at university, where lecturers do not slow down language and assume students have already crossed the lexical bar. If students enter university still below it, they must simultaneously learn academic content, learn academic English, and adapt to independent study. It is precisely this triple load that currently drives the existence and purpose of Departments of English Language Teaching in most Sri Lankan state universities — remediation programs that address a school-to-university alignment failure. This is not a university problem: the lexical bar must be crossed *before* English becomes the medium of instruction, not after.

Grade 11 is the last safe transition point. The question is what should be the starting point? The 2022 Proposed English Curriculum (NIE 2022) begins this lexical journey or progression in Grade 3 with the

[8] The use of the different terms language comprehension and reading comprehension is deliberate. Language comprehension refers to oral language skills but when combined with word recognition in reading it determines reading comprehension.

introduction of Tier 2 vocabulary, followed by Tier 3 in Grade 8, and positions students to cross the lexical bar by Grade 11. This is a well thought through progression in line with target CEFR levels.

2.2 THE SCIENCE OF LEARNING (SOL)

The Science of Learning (SoL) is the science of how students learn and the implications for instructional practice. It draws on cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and education psychology and provides evidence-based research on how students learn and teaching practices that best support students' learning.[9]

A simple definition of learning is that "to learn is to form an internal model of the external world" (Dehaene's 2020:5). The internal model is formed by storing knowledge, skills, and schemata[10] in long term memory. Therefore, we have learnt something when there is a change in our long-term memory (AERO 2023:5).[11] Instructional practice facilitates the learning process.

There are two important SoL concepts that explain how students learn: human cognitive architecture (Kirschner et al 2006), and cognitive load theory (Sweller 2016). These foundational concepts have implications for how students learn and how instructional design and practice can best support learning (Jha 2024; AERO 2023). The key implications relate to instructional sequencing, the critical importance of explicit instruction for novice learners, and spaced retrieval practice.

2.2.1 Human cognitive architecture and cognitive load theory

Human cognitive architecture describes how our mental or cognitive structures are organised and their role in the learning process. "Working memory is the mental workspace that students use to actively engage with the facts, concepts and procedures they encounter, while long-term memory stores this knowledge for future use. " (AERO 2023:5) Working memory can also draw on information already stored in long-term memory while processing new input. When processing new information that has not yet been stored in long-term memory, working memory is very limited in capacity and duration. But there are no limitations when retrieving existing knowledge from long-term memory.

Cognitive load theory holds that learning only occurs when instruction stays within the boundaries of human cognitive architecture so as to reduce the load on working memory and allow change in long-term memory with accurate updating of schemata. (CESE 2017). The type of knowledge being acquired is also a factor.

Sweller (2016) distinguishes knowledge and skill on two dimensions: the types of knowledge we acquire and the process by which it is acquired.

- Biologically primary knowledge (BPK) is acquired naturally (e.g. oral language) and therefore tends not to require explicit instruction from others. BPK and related skills tend to be domain generic-cognitive (e.g. problem solving).
- Biologically secondary knowledge (BSK) (e.g. the way speech is encoded in writing, grammar, spelling rules) is a wide array of knowledge that requires both primary knowledge and explicit instruction. BSK and related skills tend to be domain-specific (e.g. decoding printed words

[9] For an overview of this research see Kirschner et al (2006:78-83).

[10] "A schema is a way of grouping and organising information that is stored in long-term memory." (Jha 2024:12). As an example, remembering 10 random items of shopping is difficult using working memory but remembering the 10 items needed for a familiar cooking recipe, while still random, draws on a schema stored in your long-term memory as a chunk which can be brought into working memory as needed. An example of a schema in literacy would be a semantic map of a word or word family.

[11] For a more nuanced discussion of definitions see Jha (2024:9).

using phonics as a foundation reading skill). Working memory limitations only apply to the acquisition of BSK and domain-specific knowledge and skills.

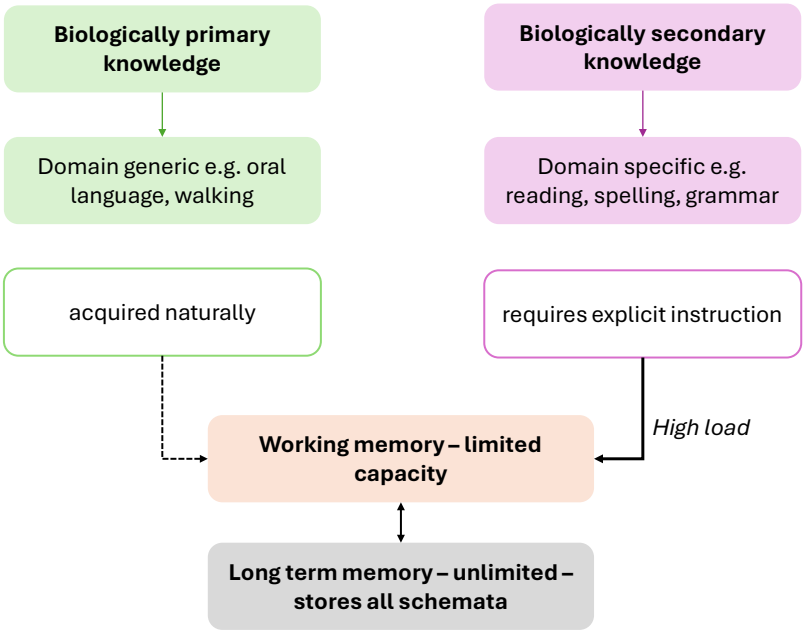

Figure 4 Human cognitive architecture and knowledge acquisition

Given the limitations of working memory, and the way knowledge is stored in long-term memory, instructional procedures for novel BSK should not overload working memory as this will lead to information being discarded (CESE 2017). Extraneous information should be excluded, and new information may need to be broken down into smaller manageable pieces for instruction taught in a logical sequence, and using visual aids or visualization to help with processing. The use of visual aids in combination with verbal information is supported by dual coding theory (Clark & Paivio 1991). Verbal information and non-verbal (visuals, concrete examples) work better in combination than either do on their own in supporting the learning process.[12]

Sequencing may move from simple to complex, general to specific, concrete to abstract. (Kirschner et al. 2022, Rosenshine 2012). "This sequencing pattern helps to build stable cognitive structures, provides a meaningful context for all instructional content" (Kirschner & Hendrick 2024:223), in particular new content which should be introduced with reference to prior knowledge and skills.

This scaffolding approach in which the student is shown both means and end, can also be a form of differentiation to enable students at different levels to make progress. All students must master the steps in sequence and scaffolding provides the right support at each step provided that it challenges the student and is reduced as the student demonstrates their ability to do the task on their own.

2.2.2 Explicit instruction for novice learners

When processing new information, students learn more efficiently and effectively if they receive explicit up-front instruction from an expert, as distinct from trying to discover the new knowledge working with

[12] This theory should not be confused or conflated with learning styles. "And remember, nobody thinks or learns best (i.e. has a visual or a verbal learning style) in an environment that only makes use of one system....There are no 'image thinkers' or 'language thinkers'. Everyone thinks with both systems, and everyone benefits from using both." (Kirschner & Hendrick 2024:108).

other novice learners. (Kirschner et al. 2006:79) Once the novice has mastered the new knowledge (consolidated in long-term memory), they can then draw on it and form new or extended schemata through problem solving, creative idea generation, and activities that involve critical thinking. They can also at that point work independently without overloading working memory (Sweller 1998).

Up-front explicit and direct instruction should consist of clear explanation and modelling by the teacher (I do), followed by worked examples and/or guided practice with constant checking for understanding, and immediate feedback and correction (We do) so mistakes don't fossilise in long-term memory. (AERO 2023; Jha 2024:14). Students can then engage in independent (alone or in groups) but closely monitored learning activities (You do). The teacher gradually releases responsibility for learning to the student as shown in Figure 5.

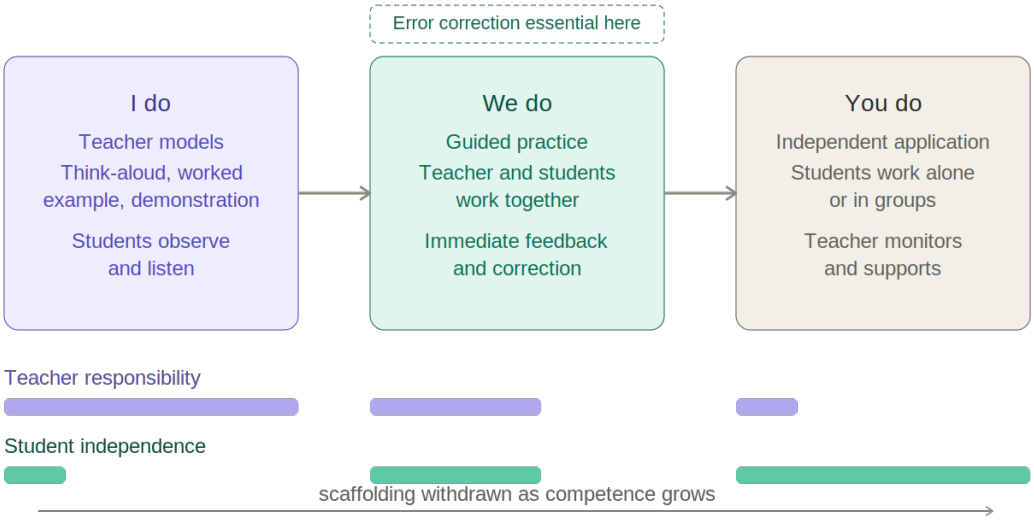

Figure 5 I do, We do, You do procedure and gradual release of responsibility

By contrast, instructional approaches with minimal or no up-front explicit instruction from an expert and minimal guidance (e.g. discovery-based learning, problem-based learning, experiential learning) are not appropriate for beginner learners in a BSK domain. Without prior knowledge the student will struggle, working memory will be overloaded, and new knowledge discarded before it is processed into long term memory. Regardless of how much information is provided before the independent learning activity, learners will construct a mental model or schema but explicit instruction as part of the procedure will result in a more accurate and complete schema, more easily constructed (learnt).

> "In more sophisticated domains of knowledge, there's a danger that students can develop faulty schemata (i.e. form misconceptions) or have an incomplete understanding of something.... novices think in qualitatively different ways than experts and this is largely due to the difference in their schemata. This has important consequences for teaching as for novices, we know that clear instruction, advance organisers, scaffolding, worked examples, and feedback can help develop those complicated schemata so vital for understanding." (Kirschner & Hendrick 2024:45)

The reference in this quote to the different ways in which novices and experts think refers to the different ways each approaches a problem. The first step in problem solving or discovery learning is to categorise the problem by drawing on prior knowledge. Experts will categorise more accurately and draw on much richer knowledge schemata. The novice learner is at a disadvantage with poorer schemata and will sometimes use the wrong indicator in a problem description in order to categorise it.

For example, when interpreting a complex sentence, an expert relies on their mastery of syntax and grammar, and related well-developed schemata that allow them to see the big picture of meaning instantly. In contrast, a novice often lacks these structural maps and is forced to process the sentence word-by-word. This lexical approach is inefficient. Because they are focusing on individual pieces rather than the system, they often miss the overarching meaning. Because the novice in this example is going word by word, they are engaging in a random search for meaning. Explicit instruction bypasses this by telling the learner, 'Look at the verb first to find the action.' This prevents the novice from wasting their mental energy on strategies that don't work, allowing them to focus entirely on the new concept.

Without some knowledge or expertise in a domain of study, and guided instruction, the progress made by a student using enquiry or discovery-based approaches will be minimal and they may also simply learn the wrong thing creating unreliable schemata or mental models in long term memory (Sweller 2016). "If the learner has no relevant concepts in long-term memory, the only thing to do is blindly search for solutions. Novices can engage in problem solving for extended periods and learn almost nothing." (Clark et al 2012:10).

Kirschner et al (2006:78-79; see also Clark et al 2012) trace the origins of current minimally guided instructional practice to constructivism "which appears to have been derived from observations that knowledge is constructed by learners ... The constructivist description of learning is accurate, but the instructional consequences suggested by constructivists [minimal guidance instruction] do not necessarily follow." (p.78). Constructivism is a philosophy of knowing that tells teachers to factor into their instructional design, students' existing knowledge and where they sit on the novice-expert spectrum.

But constructivism is not a pedagogy. This distinction between philosophy and pedagogy is critical in the current Sri Lankan context, given the strong constructivist orientation of the curriculum reform agenda as evidenced in the new Grade 6 English curriculum. The curriculum cycle in Sri Lanka has already gone 2 years beyond the standard 8-year cycle. If SoL is not incorporated into this cycle then it will fall short of its goals and that will impact a whole new generation of students.

2.2.3 Spaced retrieval practice

Further opportunities to practice retrieval from long-term memory and apply new knowledge strengthens retention and increases automaticity of retrieval. Retrieval is not simply revision. It can involve a new activity that requires learning to be retrieved from long term memory, tests, quizzes, in class prompts and questioning (AERO 2023:19). "If working memory relies strongly on long-term memory and novel information is more likely to 'stick' when it can be connected to existing knowledge, teaching and learning should involve the same content and be practiced over an extended period of time to ensure it is retained." (Jha 2024:14) In other words information is remembered better and for longer.

Retrieval practice should therefore be spaced. Spacing means spreading out the retrieval practice over several sessions (a day or two apart) for example reviewing previously learnt material at the start of a lesson, or learning activities which combine previously learnt material and new knowledge. Spacing makes retrieval more effortful and this in turn strengthens long term memory and schemata. (Dunlosky et al 2013)

3 CURRICULUM AND SYLLABUS EVALUATION

This chapter evaluates how well the syllabus's instructional design delivers on those goals, using SoR and SoL as the evaluative frameworks. SoR provides the evidence base for what students need to be explicitly taught in order to read and write independently in an alphabetic language. SoL provides the evidence base for how instruction must be designed if new knowledge is to be retained and transferred rather than encountered and forgotten.

The thematic modules of the new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus are engaging and personally relevant. The text selection in Module 2 is authentic and knowledge-building, and its use of model texts across all three modules is pedagogically sound if combined with explicit instruction and scaffolding.

However, the evaluation identifies two categories of problem. The first is structural absence. Phonics and decoding instruction, systematic vocabulary pre-teaching, and explicit reading strategy instruction are entirely absent. The second is architectural misalignment. The syllabus's constructivist, discovery-oriented pedagogy is applied uniformly to novice learners for whom SoL research consistently prescribes explicit instruction first. They are failures of instructional design that no teacher, however skilled, can compensate for without a revised framework to work from. The retrofit strategy in Chapter 5 addresses both categories of problem directly.

3.1 SOR ALIGNMENT EVALUATION

Grade 6 is the first year of secondary English and, for many students it is also the first sustained encounter with extended English texts and a transition from oral familiarity to print-based language use for academic purposes. If literacy foundations are not secured at this point, lexical gaps widen rapidly in later grades.

These foundations should be built from Grade 1 focusing on phonological awareness, from Grade 3 with an intensive foundation phonics program before students start to read English, followed by ongoing explicit phonics instruction (including morphology) through primary grades to expand knowledge of the alphabetic code, and further develop decoding skills, fluency and language comprehension.

The evaluation that follows assumes a continuation of the current primary grade English syllabus which has no literacy skills foundation. The evaluation concludes that the new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus therefore have a significant gap that must be filled. The retrofit strategy outlined in Appendix D shows how this can be done. Even if the foundation skills are to be added to the new primary grade syllabi (as per Vaughan 2024), for students entering Grade 6 in 2027, 2028, and 2029, the retrofit strategy for Grade 6 is still necessary.

3.1.1 Word reading and word recognition skills

Students currently entering Grade 6 begin formal instruction in reading English in Grade 3. Vaughan (2024) has identified the foundational literacy skills gap in the current primary English curriculum and syllabus. The consequence of this gap is that students enter Grade 6 without the literacy skills needed to make the transition to secondary academic reading. The new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus must therefore begin to address this gap through explicit instruction, given that the Grade 6 learners are effectively novice learners in respect of these skills.

The new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus unfortunately do not attempt to bridge the gap. There is no explicit phonics instruction, no systematic spelling instruction, no support for decoding longer or

unfamiliar words, and no fluency development activity across Modules 1–3. Nowhere in the Grade 6 Learning Outcomes or Performance Standards is there an explicit requirement for the behaviours that secure word recognition skills, such as requiring students to:

- decode unfamiliar multisyllabic words using phonics and spelling-pattern knowledge;
- recognise words automatically based on orthographic knowledge and morphology; or
- read with sufficient fluency to free working memory for comprehension.

Word recognition reading outcomes instead focus on communicative performance such as identifying information, answering questions, expressing opinions. This means a learner can meet Grade 6 reading competencies through memorisation of words as a sequence of letters[13], or guessing from context or illustration or sentence position[14], without ever developing the independent word-reading skills that academic reading requires.

The consequences are visible in all three Modules. Chapter 4 contains a detailed SoR/SoL based evaluation of three literacy-oriented lessons (one from each module) to illustrate the problem. Here are three illustrative examples taken from those modules:

- Module 1 Lesson 8 ('Me on the Map') requires students to listen to a list of place names (village, district, province, Grama Niladari Division) and show the matching word card – Country, District, Province prepared as homework activity from the previous lesson. They are then asked to fill in the blanks in a short text with place names related to these three words. Students who have not learnt phonics and cannot encode from speech to print will have no strategy available to them for this task, such as phonological scaffolding (segmenting and blending sounds), syllable segmentation, or sound-spelling support. A student who cannot read Anuradhapura independently will not be able to write it and has no way to complete the task accurately other than prior memorisation or copying.
- Module 2 Lesson 7 asks students to "mark difficult words as they read" and then "elicit meanings from them". But the lesson procedure offers no decoding strategy (e.g. segmenting and blending sounds) for students who cannot read the marked words in the first place. If they cannot be read no connection can be made to speech and word recognition will fail.
- Module 3, Lesson 3 ('Our Pets') asks students to write a description of their pet from a planning table. The writing requires the production of words such as *whiskers, butterflies, catches*. These are words which contain complex spelling patterns. No spelling support or phoneme-grapheme guidance is provided. Students who have not secured knowledge of the alphabetic code of English (phonics) will encode inaccurately, and because no feedback protocol is specified beyond "record mistakes and provide general feedback", these errors are likely to be neither caught nor corrected in the lesson in which they occur.

This gap in word-recognition skills is the most consequential gap in the curriculum. Without adequate word-level reading skills, comprehension activities will only ever work for students who arrive already able to decode. The curriculum currently provides no mechanism for those who cannot.

[13] Memorising words as a sequence of letters is a severely limiting instruction and learning strategy. When we read we convert print to sound and recognise the word if we have heard it in speech. The human brain does not convert print to letter names. Phonics teaches the alphabetic code which enables students to read independently. (Dehaene 2009; Seidenberg 2017; Moats 2020)

[14] This is referred to as 'three-cuing', in other words using clues such as context, pictures, or sentence structure to guess a word, instead of phonics and decoding. This is not supported by SoR.

3.1.2 Language comprehension skills

For Grade 6 students in Sri Lanka using English as a second language, the absence of foundation literacy skills in word recognition as discussed above is a critical gap. Many students entering Grade 6 will have limited automaticity in English word reading leading to poor fluency which in turn impedes comprehension.

Reading comprehension outcomes in the new syllabus include competencies such as identifying cause and effect, distinguishing fact from opinion, and making inferences which, in principle, are substantive targets. But the texts against which these competencies are assessed are short, thematically familiar, vocabulary-light (primarily Tier 1), and syntactically simple. As a result, the inferential challenge in these tasks is one of ideas rather than language. Students must think beyond the stated content, but they can do so using simple everyday vocabulary without needing to engage the academic register that genuine reading comprehension requires. Academic reading in secondary school and beyond requires students to handle both challenges simultaneously - complex ideas expressed in complex language.

For example, Module 2 Lesson 7 ('Inspiring Personalities') is the module's most reading-intensive lesson and illustrates this clearly. The core reading activity asks students to read three short paragraphs written about famous people, then answer true/false questions and complete a table. The comprehension demand is literal, that is finding stated information. There is no requirement to infer beyond the explicitly stated content, to synthesise, or the kind of linguistic processing that academic reading requires.

The 'Thinking Space' prompt that follows - "Who is the world-famous person you like the most? Why do you like him/her?" - is the lesson's only invitation to use explanatory language. But it is completely unscaffolded. There is no provided sentence frame, no target vocabulary, no model response. Students who answer "I like Michael Jackson because he is famous" have technically met the task. There is no mechanism in the lesson to push them toward structured reasoning e.g. "I admire him because his music brought people together despite social divisions", that would constitute academic language comprehension.

The syntax taught across the three modules reflects the same shallowness. Module 3 provides explicit instruction in Simple Present Tense (Lesson 3) and basic plurals. What is absent is any attention to the clause relationships that underpin academic meaning at the sentence level. Students are given sentence frames such as "It has [adjective] [body part]" but never frames such as "Although it is small, it can..." or "It is important because..." The result is writing that can be grammatically accurate at the clause level without approaching the syntactic complexity that academic language comprehension and production require.

There is also no explicit comprehension strategy instruction anywhere in Modules 1–3. Strategies such as identifying main idea versus supporting detail, using text structure as a comprehension scaffold, or making inferences from syntactic cues are not named, modelled, or practised. The SoR evidence base is clear that comprehension strategies must be explicitly taught using the gradual release of responsibility sequence (I do, We do, You do) before students can use them independently and in order to become transferable (Duke and Pearson 2002) . Practising comprehension through task completion, without naming or modelling the strategies involved, develops task familiarity rather than strategic reading skill. Simply providing a text, asking comprehension questions, and eliciting answers is comprehension testing, not comprehension teaching.

3.1.3 SoR alignment inventory

A full SoR alignment evaluation of 27 lessons for Modules 1-3 is provided in Appendix B. The evaluation shows that the three example lessons referenced above scored squarely in the middle of the distribution on every indicator. Moreover, looking across all modules and lessons, it is clear that these are not lesson-level failures. They are structural absences at the curriculum design level.

- Across all 27 teaching lessons in Term 1, phonics and decoding, and vocabulary pre-teaching instruction score zero. Explicit reading strategy instruction appears partially in only 2 out of 27 lessons (both are the poetry lessons - M2·L9 and M3·L9). Fluency modelling only appears in these same two lessons.
- Module 1 is predominantly oral by design so it's fair to say it was never intended to address SoR foundational skills. The more concerning finding is in Module 2, which *is* explicitly titled "Reading for Life" and has 9 reading lessons, yet still scores zero for phonics, zero for reading strategy instruction until the final teaching lesson, and zero for vocabulary pre-teaching.
- Text Comprehension Support is the strongest SoR indicator at partial in 10/27 lessons (37%), but this reflects pre-reading activation only. No lesson achieves the full standard of activation plus during-reading scaffolding. Writing–Reading Connection reaches partial in 14/27 lessons (52%), concentrated in Module 3 where model texts are routinely provided. But the connection is always implicit, never explicitly taught.
- Across all 10 Module 1 Progress Checks, every self-assessment item is oral. The self-assessment architecture of the curriculum does not include reading or writing as learner-visible goals. The vocabulary support box pattern (post-encounter, not pre-teaching), zero phonics/decoding, zero full reading strategy instruction, zero full gradual release, unstructured peer editing with generic criteria, and foundational skills are absent from all Progress Check self-assessment items.

The syllabus is based on the curriculum. The above critique is not pointing to a failure of the syllabus (lessons procedures and Modules) to operationalise the curriculum but rather a failure of the curriculum to address the foundational literacy skills at any stage from Grade 1 (Vaughan 2024). Given the delivery pressures in the current policy context, the pragmatic solution proposed in Chapter 5 is a retrofit of the skills directly to the syllabus at the level of instructional design (lesson procedures) and Modules content.

3.1.4 Lexical competence

The Proposed English Language Curriculum for General Education (NIE 2022) represents a genuine conceptual advance over previous iterations. It explicitly distinguishes Tier 1 and Tier 2 vocabulary from Grade 3 onwards (NIE 2022:32), Tier 3 from Grade 8, and acknowledges the difference between high-frequency, low-frequency, and academic vocabulary. Most importantly it signals a lexical progression from everyday communication to academic language across Grades 6–9. This is an important and overdue shift and is acknowledged as such. It also contains "Content Grids" that provide explicit content guidance for each grade based on CEFR competencies[15], such as what vocabulary at what Tier, what grammar structures, what orthographic and phonological competences should be taught at each grade level. These specifications ensure that the syllabus content, learning activities, and assessment can accurately operationalise the curriculum intent.

The 2022 curriculum for Grades 3-5 specifies "Vocabulary Tier 2 under the selected topics relevant to the grade level under the themes [everyday themes covered in the Grade syllabus] and learning areas".

[15] The competencies are: Linguistic (Lexical, Grammatical, Semantic, Phonological, Orthographic, Orthoepic); Socio-linguistic, Pragmatic, and Academic Language Functions. We are concerned here with Linguistic-Lexical.

(p.32). But from Grade 6-11 (p. 62) the lexical progression accelerates with the addition of "academic general and technical categories" and increasing range of contexts for vocabulary use.[16]

The 2022 document refers in the Grade 6-11 Content Grids (pp.62-83) to academic 'categories' (under Lexical Competence), academic 'contexts' (under Pragmatic Competence - Social) and 'academic content' (Pragmatic competence – Academic) in relation to vocabulary and language use. The 2022 document explicitly positions English as a medium for accessing the kinds of texts, vocabulary and discourse students will encounter in subject-area learning (e.g. science, history, geography). It is explicitly cross-disciplinary.

Content, context, and categories comparison: 2022 vs 2025

The 2022 document explains Tier 2 as "words that are needed in an academic context and provide access to more complex topics and discussions outside everyday use, useful across multiple topic and subject areas" and "Teachers should explicitly teach these words, to ensure they can develop their learners' understanding and expression of complex ideas. These words are useful for multiple purposes, and their use and understanding reflect and mature understanding of academic language. Learners should learn to use Tier 2 words in multiple contexts and for multiple purposes." (NIE 2022:87-88).

The new Grade 6 English curriculum also refers to academic context in the preamble sections and academic content in the Curriculum Grids. But, it does not include the Content Grids from the 2022 document and adopts a modified lexical standard for Grade 6 which is primarily Tier 1 with some implied Tier 2/3 vocabulary in multiple references in Content Standards to "academic content". However, whatever the intent is, there is no explicit reference to vocabulary Tiers, and no Tier 2 vocabulary categories specified.

The vocabulary categories specified across Modules 1–3 of the new Grade 6 syllabus (e.g. "words related to personal information," "words related to feelings, preferences, abilities," "words related to cookery and craft") are all thematic. When vocabulary is specified by topic or theme, it will always generate Tier 1 words, because everyday topics are described in everyday language. A teacher can fully comply with module expectations, maintain learner engagement, and meet all assessment criteria without systematically introducing a single cross-domain Tier 2 word.

Instructional comparison

Explicit instruction means attention to pronunciation, spelling, morphological structure, sentence-level use, and retrieval across lessons. There is no explicit Tier 2 vocabulary instruction in the new Grade 6 English syllabus even where "academic content" is mentioned. The assumption seems to be that students will learn through exposure.

The only way to guarantee that Tier 2 vocabulary is included and taught, is to specify it linguistically and by function. For example: students will use at least two logical connectors and one abstract noun in their writing; this lesson introduces three academic verbs from the New General Service List (Browne

[16] Grade 6: "Tier 1 & 2 vocabulary under the selected topics relevant to the grade level in **limited contexts** under **academic technical and general categories**. " Grade 7: "Tier 1 & 2 vocabulary under the selected topics relevant to the grade level in **familiar context**s under **academic technical and general categories**." Grades 8 and 9: "Tier 1 , 2 & 3 vocabulary under the selected topics relevant to the grade level in **different contexts** under **academic technical and general categories**." Grade 10: "Tier 1, 2 & 3 vocabulary under the selected topics relevant to the grade level in a **wide variety of contexts** under **academic technical and general categories**." Grade 11: "Tier 1, 2 & 3 vocabulary under the selected topics relevant to the grade level in limited contexts under academic technical and general categories."

2013).[17] The core Tier 2 academic vocabulary from standard reference lists such as the New General Service List (Browne 2013) for example *therefore, however, although, consequently, result, process, effect, reason, suggest, conclude, contrast, significant, purpose, influence, require, cause, depend, factor, impact*) appears nowhere in the new Grade 6 module vocabulary specifications.[18] The consequence is that the Tier 2 trajectory that the 2022 Proposed English Curriculum calls for cannot emerge from the new Grade 6 Term 1 syllabi as currently written, regardless of teacher quality or effort.

The demand for academic language is present in the syllabus. The instruction that would allow students to meet it is not. The syllabus uses Tier 2 as the language of assessment while treating Tier 1 as the language of instruction. Across all thirty lessons, the words used to describe what students can do in Progress Check descriptors such as *infer, extract, identify, purpose, features, appropriate, describe, organise, suggest, feedback*, appear only in assessment rubrics, never as vocabulary learning targets. Students are expected to demonstrate competencies using metalanguage they have not been taught.

Every writing task in Module 3 contains a "why do you like it?" prompt: applied to pets (Lesson 3), familiar places (Lesson 4), and people (Lesson 7). These prompts require causal and evaluative language such as *because, therefore, I believe, this shows, as a result, which means that*. Not one of these prompts is accompanied by a sentence frame or target vocabulary for the causal or evaluative register required. Students have no linguistic means to answer at the level the prompt demands, so they produce simple declaratives instead: "I like my dog. It is cute." rather than "I like my dog because it is loyal and always waits for me, which shows that animals can be true companions."

The same pattern appears in Module 2's Thinking Space questions. The prompts "Why is it important to read nutritional facts?", and "What is the lesson we can learn from the story?" demand explanatory reasoning. They are entirely unscaffolded.

The gap between what the task requires and what students have been equipped to produce will manifest most visibly in the writing of students from lower-resource backgrounds who have no supplementary exposure to academic English outside the classroom.

Implications beyond Grade 6

If Grade 6 is not following the lexical trajectory and Content Grids of the 2022 curriculum document in terms of content, categories, context and instruction, then it is likely that other new syllabi for primary and secondary grades may also fail to do so. This would be a backward step even from the current inadequate lexical progression (Vaughan 2025). The most critical issue is that students will arrive at

[17] The General Service List (GSL) was first published in 1953 (West 1953 as cited in Browne 2013:13) and updated to the New General Service List by Browne in 2013. It is a "list of important high frequency vocabulary words for second language learners of English" drawn from the 1.6 billion-word Cambridge English Corpus (CEC). A *word* in the NGSL includes "the headword in all its various parts of speech and includes all inflected forms" (Browne 2013:15). The NGSL does not include the Academic Corpus from the CEC. For a comprehensive Tier 2 academic word list see Coxhead (2000).

[18] Some Tier 2 vocabulary does appear in the Term 1 Grade 6 syllabus. But they do so incidentally and are not taught as transferable academic vocabulary. For example: in Module 1, *located* appears in Lesson 8 in the context of describing a home area. It is being used as a content word for that specific task, not introduced as a high-utility academic verb that transfers across domains (e.g. 'the problem is located in…', 'the cause can be located in…'). In Module 3, *participated* appears in a word bank for a gap-fill task in Lesson 5. This is the clearest illustration in all thirty lessons of the difference between encountering a Tier 2 word and learning it: the word is placed directly in the student's hand for production, but with no definition, no word family, no sentence model, and no retrieval plan. It is used once and abandoned.

University unprepared for academic language and learning with the required lexical competence, that is, full control of Tier 2 vocabulary, as is illustrated in Figure 6.

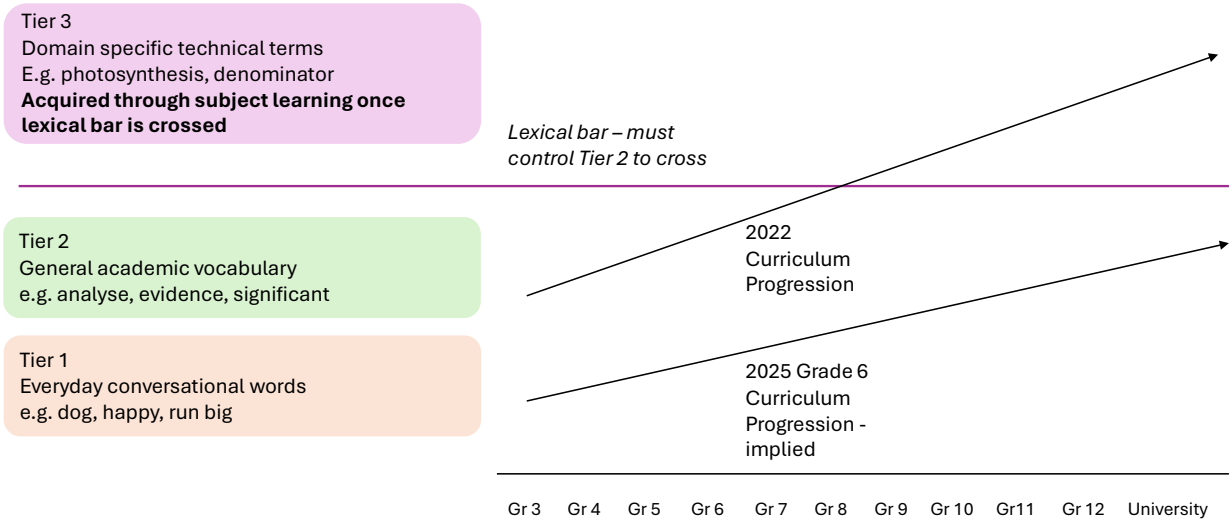

Figure 6 Lexical progression - 2022 Curriculum vs 2025

In summary, the 2022 Proposed Curriculum sets a defensible lexical trajectory with Tier 2 introduced at Grade 3 and academic general and technical vocabulary added at Grade 6. The 2025 Grade 6 Teachers' Guide does not carry the Content Grids that would operationalise this trajectory, does not specify Tier 2 vocabulary in its own Curriculum Grid, and directs teachers to let students acquire vocabulary through activity exposure. The curriculum's own stated intent is not delivered in the instructional apparatus that teachers will work from.

3.2 SoL Alignment Evaluation

The philosophy of the *General Instructions for the Implementation of Modules* (NIE 2025:44-45), is strongly aligned with P21 Framework (Battelle for kids 2026; Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2009). However, from a cognitive science perspective, it leans heavily towards constructivist discovery, creative production, and collaborative engagement and insufficiently toward explicit modelling, retrieval practice, spacing, schema consolidation, and cognitive load management. Adopting the P21 Framework without understanding SoL, in particular the importance of prior domain knowledge as pre-requisite for the P21 skills, and the distinction between novice and expert in applying these skills, will be counter-productive in terms of curriculum goals.

What follows is a discussion of the false dichotomies implicit in the new Grade 6 English Curriculum and Syllabus and the consequences for student learning of failing to take account of the differences between the novice learner and the expert learner in relation to cognitive processing and instructional design implications.

3.2.1 Student-centered vs teacher-led

"A 21st century classroom is a dynamic learning environment that prepares students to thrive in an increasingly complex, interconnected, and rapidly changing world. It moves beyond traditional, teacher-centered instruction and instead emphasizes active, student-centered learning where collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking are at the core. In this setting, students are encouraged to apply knowledge to real-life situations through hands-on and

> project-based activities that foster curiosity and problem-solving skills. The 21st century classroom also values inclusivity and cultural awareness, providing opportunities for learners from diverse backgrounds to share perspectives and develop mutual respect. Technology and media literacy play a vital role, equipping students to evaluate information critically and use digital tools responsibly. Teachers act as facilitators and guides, nurturing communication, ethical decision-making, leadership, and personal responsibility. Ultimately, the 21st century classroom cultivates adaptable, lifelong learners who are well-prepared for both academic success and the demands of life beyond school." (NIE 2025:12)

The goals articulated in this passage - adaptable, lifelong learners equipped for a complex world - are uncontroversial and widely shared. The instructional philosophy proposed as the means to achieve them is, however, in significant tension with the evidence base in cognitive science and the specific learning needs of Grade 6 students in Sri Lanka.

The quoted passage establishes a binary between "traditional, teacher-centred instruction" and "active, student-centred learning," positioning the former as something to be moved beyond. This is a rhetorical framing rather than an evidence-based distinction. SoL does not support a choice between teacher-led and student-centred approaches. What the research supports is a *sequence*: explicit, teacher-led instruction first, followed by guided practice with immediate corrective feedback, followed by increasingly independent application. This sequence, also described as the gradual release of responsibility approach (or I Do–We Do–You Do lesson procedure) is not teacher-centred *or* student-centred. It is both, in the right order, and the order matters enormously. Collapsing this sequence into a general preference for student-centred methods removes the instructional scaffolding that novice learners depend on most.

The passage presents collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking as competencies that can be placed "at the core" of classroom instruction from the outset. The SoL evidence is clear, however, that these competencies are knowledge dependent. Critical thinking about a text requires sufficient prior knowledge of the topic and the language to reason about it. Meaningful collaboration on a task requires each participant to have enough relevant knowledge to contribute independently. Creative production in writing requires automaticity in spelling, grammar, and sentence construction to free up working memory for compositional thinking. None of these conditions can be assumed for Grade 6 students who are still developing foundational English literacy skills. (Vaughan 2024)

The 21st century competencies are legitimate long-term outcomes of good instruction, but they cannot serve as the instructional foundation for students who have not yet secured the prerequisite knowledge and skills. Placing them at the core of a curriculum before those foundations are in place risks producing the surface appearance of these competencies, for example students who appear to be collaborating and problem-solving, but without learning, that is, without a change in long-term memory.

The passage's most consequential claim from a SoL perspective is the repositioning of teachers as "facilitators and guides" rather than as instructors. For expert learners with substantial prior knowledge, a facilitative approach that encourages independent exploration can be highly effective. For novice learners, however, the research evidence consistently points in the opposite direction.

Kirschner et al. (2006), in a comprehensive review of the evidence on minimally guided instructional approaches, concluded that such methods, including discovery learning, problem-based learning, and inquiry learning, consistently produce inferior outcomes for novice learners compared to explicit instruction. The explanation is grounded in cognitive load theory: novice learners, by definition, do not

yet have the domain knowledge stored in long-term memory that would allow them to manage the cognitive demands of self-directed exploration. When a facilitator withholds direct instruction in order to let students discover or construct knowledge independently, they are not empowering students. They are removing the support that novice learners need most and overloading the working memory that explicit instruction is specifically designed to protect.

Grade 6 students encountering academic English literacy are novice learners by definition, and many have not yet secured the foundational word recognition and language comprehension skills that fluent reading, even for thematic texts using primarily Tier 1 language, requires. For this cohort, the shift from explicit instruction to facilitation is a premature withdrawal of the instructional support on which their progress depends. This does not mean that student agency, collaborative tasks, and real-world application have no place in the Grade 6 English classroom. It means they belong at the *end* of the instructional sequence, not at its core. The I Do and We do phases must precede the You Do phase, and the scaffolding must be removed gradually as competence grows, not assumed away at the outset.

This false dichotomy between teacher-led and student-centred also raises equity issues. Students who have enjoyed better educational and language immersion opportunities will be at an advantage in inquiry-based tasks. The tasks will therefore simply increase the disparities in learning. For this reason, up front teacher-centred scaffolded instruction is critical to ensure that no student is at a disadvantage from the start of a learning activity. Student-centred activities work best when foundational skills are in place for all students. The label “traditional” is misleading and misplaced. Instructional practices such as explicit instruction, worked examples, spaced retrieval practice, and scaffolding are supported by cognitive science.

Finally, the passage's reference to technology and media literacy as playing "a vital role" in the 21st century classroom warrants scrutiny in the Sri Lankan context. For students in well-resourced urban schools with reliable internet access, digital literacy is a legitimate curriculum goal. For the substantial proportion of Grade 6 students in rural and under-resourced schools - precisely the students for whom the equity arguments in this paper are most pressing - digital tools are not consistently available either at school or at home. Positioning technology as central to the curriculum vision without acknowledging this resource reality risks widening rather than narrowing the equity gap. The more pressing digital divide in the Sri Lankan Grade 6 context is not between students who can and cannot use digital tools: it is between students who can and cannot read.

3.2.2 Incidental learning vs deliberate / intentional instruction

Letting students “pick up vocabulary and rules needed for activities” (NIE 2025:44) assumes incidental learning will be sufficient. But this mode of learning requires a large volume of input and repetitive encounters with the vocabulary.

Deliberate, spaced, cumulative vocabulary instruction is ultimately more efficient and effective (Beck et al 2013;Dutro, Moran 2003;Hennessy 2021). This means firstly that at the level of the individual lesson essential vocabulary should be pre-taught before reading and vocabulary depth further developed through structured activities post-reading. Incidental instruction is only appropriate during reading for the purpose of sentence level comprehension.

Secondly, retrieval practice is key to strengthen long term memory schemata. This means reviewing previously learnt vocabulary, cumulatively at the beginning of a lesson. Students should learn to retrieve meaning from long term memory, not through guessing or picture or context clues.

3.2.3 Discovery learning vs explicit instruction

> "The goal of instruction is not to have learners search for and discover information, but rather to give them specific support for guidance about how to cognitively manipulate information in ways that are consistent with a learning goal and store the result in long-term memory.... Finally, for students with considerable prior knowledge, strong support and guidance while learning is most often found to be equally effective to unguided and minimally guided approaches." (Kirschner & Hendrick 2024:236)

Advising teachers not to explain grammar rules before doing activities and encouraging them to use activities that allow students to discover language rules and vocabulary before any instruction is provided, goes directly against SoL research and evidence.

As discussed earlier, SoL research clearly shows that this discovery learning based approach is not appropriate on its own for novice learners. It will increase the cognitive load on students as they try to infer the rule, the structures or syntax, and the meaning simultaneously. As a result, there will be weak schema formation in long term memory, and slower consolidation of knowledge and skill over time. There is a level of difference between shallow pattern awareness as is the likely outcome of discovering grammar and extracting rules which are stored in long term memory.

Another important consideration is student self-efficacy, that is, the student's belief in their ability to achieve a learning goal. Students who have the pre-requisite knowledge and skills in a domain are able to self-regulate their learning to achieve the learning goal and this in turn contributes to self-efficacy. Explicit instruction and modelling followed by guided practice and then closely monitored application (which may involve re-discovery) with immediate error correction is not only better aligned with SoL and SoR, but it also builds self-efficacy especially for low achieving learners. (Kirschner & Hendrick 2024:132,156)

3.2.4 Cognitive vs topic interleaving

The new syllabus requires teachers to interleave the three Modules lesson by lesson: Lesson 1 of Module 1, then Lesson 1 of Module 2, then Lesson 1 of Module 3, before returning to Lesson 2 of Module 1, and so on. The most likely rationale is that each Module has different Learning Skill Area focus (broadly Module 1 - oral communication, Module 2 - reading, Module 3 - writing), and the designers wanted students practising across all three skill areas every week rather than spending several consecutive weeks on one skill before moving to the next. That is a reasonable communicative language teaching instinct: keep all skill areas active throughout the term.

However, it is important to distinguish between two very different uses of the term *interleavin*g in the learning sciences literature. Cognitive interleaving (Rohrer & Taylor, 2007; Taylor & Rohrer, 2010) refers to mixing different problem types or skill categories within a single practice session, so that students must identify which strategy applies before applying it. This strengthens long-term retention and discrimination between concepts. Individual lessons in the Modules sometimes resemble this type of interleaving and this has been found to be of moderate utility as a learning technique (Dunlosky et al. 2013).

However, what the new Grade 6 syllabus implements consistently across Modules is better described as topic rotation: cycling through three separate content threads on consecutive days. Topic and cognitive interleaving are not the same thing, and the research support for cognitive interleaving does not necessarily apply to topic rotation.

From a SoL perspective, topic rotation without a retrieval structure creates a compounding problem. Spacing, that is revisiting material after a gap, only produces a long-term memory benefit when the gap

is followed by effortful retrieval. In the interleaved structure, each Module thread is revisited roughly every three lessons. This gap is long enough for significant forgetting to occur. Because no retrieval mechanism is built into lesson openings, however, the gap produces forgetting rather than consolidation.

The context-switching cost further compounds this. Each Module thread has its own vocabulary set, grammar focus, and text type. Students arrive at each lesson having spent the previous two lessons in entirely different linguistic and conceptual territory. For weaker students in particular, reactivating the relevant prior knowledge before new content can be introduced requires time the lesson design does not allocate. Without a structured reactivation mechanism, each lesson in a Module thread effectively begins close to zero, and schemata consolidation - the gradual building of well-connected knowledge networks in long-term memory - is significantly impeded.

A more effective approach, as reflected in the previous syllabus, would be to address all four macro-skills within a single thematic unit before moving to the next, so that vocabulary, grammar, and schema are consolidated around consistent content. Given that the interleaved structure is now mandated and full redesign before 2027 is not feasible, however, the goal should not be to dismantle the structure but to retrofit it with the retrieval architecture it currently lacks as outlined in Section 5.2.

3.2.5 Feedback and assessment

While we commonly refer to feedback this is a shorthand for a three-step process of feed up which helps the student understand the goal, feedback which informs the teacher and student of how they are progressing towards the goal and the gap, and feed forward which tells the student what they need to do next. Feedback should address the task and any misunderstanding of concepts, the process of production, help students to self-regulate (monitor themselves and adjust their learning to progress), and provide personal feedback which is non-threatening and encouraging. (Hattie, Timperley 2007)

While there are guidelines in the General Instructions for the Implementation of Modules (NIE 2025:44-45) relating to feedback and feedforward they do not address a core principle of SoL in relation to the novice learner, that is, the critical importance of immediate corrective feedback and specific error correction. If this is not done there is a strong risk that errors will fossilise in long term memory and schemata. Timely corrective feedback is essential. Corrective feedback does not mean simply telling the student what they did or said incorrectly and then giving them the corrected version. It must also model how the student can self-correct and prompt them to do so. For example, failing to recognise a word or reading the word incorrectly would be followed by a prompt to sound out (segment) the word.

In a review of 681 studies on assessment, Black and Wiliam (1998A) found that assessment *for* learning is far more beneficial than assessment *of* learning. Assessment *for* learning is the purpose of formative assessment. Black and William (1998B) define assessment (formative, summative, self-assessment) as activities “that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities. Such assessment becomes *formative assessment* when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching to meet student needs.” (p.140).

This adaptation process is done through teacher-student interaction to understand the gap between the student’s current knowledge or skill and what each needs to do next, that is, how they need to modify learning and teaching so the student achieves their goal. The student’s own perception of their current level of mastery of knowledge and skill, rather than their standard of performance against criteria is a much stronger motivator to respond to feedback. (Black & Wiliam 1998B)

The definitions section of the Teachers Guide (NIE:2025:14) defines assessment criteria as “a set of specific standards used to evaluate a learner’s performance”. The criteria for the Reading and Viewing

learning area are expressed in terms of accuracy and adequacy of information, relevance, clarity, originality, organisation, range (vocabulary), and language (grammar and mechanics). These criteria all relate to communicative competence and purpose but not the pre-requisite knowledge and skills mastery that enable performance standards to be met.

The Teachers' Guide provides specific formative and summative assessment tasks for each Module. The formative assessments that are provided are done as a task within selected lessons in each Module and rubrics are provided for marking. This testing schedule within each Module allows students to respond and can potentially also help teachers adjust to student needs. Perr-assessment and self-assessment in theory is also a strength as this can be used to inform students and teachers about the nature of the knowledge or skill gap.

However, while the placeholders for effective formative assessment are in place in the syllabus, there is no guidance to teachers on how to use the results of the formative or even summative assessment tasks to adjust their teaching and the learning activities, which are tightly proscribed in the Guide and Modules text. The assessments also do not provide information to students or teachers about the knowledge and skill gap. They are primarily performance oriented.

The Progress Check is a self-assessment instrument perhaps intended as formative assessment. Self-assessment is an essential part of formative assessment (Black and Wiliam's 1998B:143) but to be effective from both a student and teacher perspective, students must have a clear understanding of the targets their learning is meant to achieve, evidence of their current level of achievement, and awareness of how they can close the gap. Every single Progress Check across all thirty lessons uses the same format: students read a list of "I can..." statements and tick one of three faces — I can do it myself / I can manage with support / I need help. The teacher plays no role in this process other than to help them complete the task.

Black and Wiliam's foundational definition of formative assessment (1998B:140), that assessment generates evidence to be used in adjusting teaching to meet learning needs, requires that the evidence reach the teacher and influence subsequent instruction. But there is no prescribed teacher action based on any of the assessments and the syllabus is tightly scripted to limit opportunity for scaffolded or differentiated instruction. "For assessment to function formatively, the results have to be used to adjust teaching and learning; thus, a significant aspect of any program will be the ways in which teachers make these adjustments." (Black & Wiliam 1998B:141).

In summary, the assessment loop in the syllabus is not closed. Teaching is not adjusted and students are not given the information or guidance they need to close the gap between what they can do and what they need to be able to do. Another missed opportunity is that research has shown that "improved formative assessment helps low achievers more than other students" (Black & Wiliam 1998B:141). One reason for this may be that many classes are large and placing expectations on teachers to adjust their teaching in response to assessment data is simply not practical. In this scenario, assessment simply serves as information for the student, parent, and teacher but without related action, it has little impact on learning.

3.2.6 SoL alignment inventory

A full SoL alignment analysis of 27 lessons from Modules 1-3 is provided in Appendix B. In summary, opportunities for durable long-term memory formation are limited. Lessons rarely embed deliberate retrieval practice, spaced review, or cumulative recall of vocabulary and structures. Gradual Release achieves full presence in only 1/27 lessons (M3·L7, the best-structured writing lesson in the term).

Retrieval Practice scores full presence in 2/27 lessons (7%). Interleaving (cognitive) scores 0/27 for full presence and 1/27 partial. This is the lowest-scoring indicator in the inventory.

These three indicators of gradual release, retrieval practice, and interleaving are the most robustly evidence-supported strategies in the learning science literature (Rosenshine, 2012; Dunlosky et al., 2013) and the weakest in this curriculum. Most tasks are recognition-based (matching, answering questions after reading) rather than retrieval-based (recalling from memory, reconstructing language without support). Without repeated, effortful retrieval, newly encountered vocabulary, orthographic patterns, and sentence structures are unlikely to consolidate into long-term memory. The topic-based interleaving of Modules further weakens the learning. As a result, learning may remain episodic and activity-bound rather than building stable, transferable language schemata.

Overall, while the curriculum is communicatively rich, it is under-engineered from a cognitive perspective. The limited explicit instruction at the start of activities and the lack of systematic retrieval architecture reduce the likelihood of efficient schema acquisition, automaticity development, and durable retention, particularly for learners with fragile decoding foundations.

3.3 SoR/SoL Summary Alignment by Module

The two preceding sections have argued the SoR and SoL misalignments in detail. Table 1 below distils the headline finding for each module under each framework. Chapter 4 then takes one lesson from each module and demonstrates what these structural problems look like at lesson level, and what a redesigned lesson looks like in their place.

Table 1 SoR and SoL Summary Alignment by Module

Module	SoR headline finding	SoL headline finding
M1 Step Up ***Listening and speaking***	There is no connection between spoken language and print. Students listen to and circle words with no attention to how those words are decoded, spelled, or structured. Tier 2 vocabulary is entirely absent across all ten lessons, while Progress Check descriptors assess students in Tier 2 metalanguage — *categorise, maintain, similarities* — they have never been taught.	Each lesson introduces new content without reviewing vocabulary from previous lessons. The three-day gap between module-thread lessons creates accidental spacing but no retrieval mechanism, so the gap produces forgetting rather than consolidation. Teacher instructions use Tier 2 metalanguage that students have not been introduced to, placing an unmanaged cognitive load on every task.
M2 Reading for Life ***Reading and viewing***	Module 2 is explicitly titled "Reading for Life" and contains nine reading lessons, yet across all nine there is no phonics or decoding support, no vocabulary pre-teaching, and no reading strategy instruction until the final lesson. Students are asked to read, extract information, and enjoy texts without any instruction in how a skilled reader approaches an unfamiliar informational text.	No lesson across the nine in Module 2 opens with structured retrieval from a previous Module 2 lesson — each lesson effectively begins from zero. The gradual release sequence is absent from reading instruction: students move directly from text to comprehension questions with no modelled intermediate step. The vocabulary journal directs students to record words from food wrappers and labels, generating Tier 1 accumulation rather

Module	SoR headline finding	SoL headline finding
		than deliberate academic vocabulary learning.
M3 Mirror Wall ***Writing and representing***	Module 3 carries the highest writing production demand of the three modules but provides no spelling instruction, no phoneme-grapheme support, and no morphological guidance. Grammar is expected to emerge inductively from exposure rather than being explicitly taught. The module simultaneously demands the most language production and provides the least Tier 2 vocabulary — all adjective sets are Tier 1, and only one Tier 2 word appears across nine lessons, placed directly in a student word bank with no definition, word family, or retrieval plan.	The General Instructions direct teachers not to explain grammar rules before activities and to let students discover rules through exposure. For novice learners this is the worst available sequence: it overloads working memory, produces shallow pattern awareness rather than reliable rules, and risks incorrect schemata consolidating in long-term memory where they become resistant to correction. Peer editing is prescribed but entirely unstructured — students are told to "check for errors" with no criteria, no checklist, and no feedback protocol.

3.4 Equity Implications

The gaps identified in this chapter are not evenly distributed in their consequences. They fall hardest on students who have the least capacity to compensate for what the syllabus does not provide.

Consider what a student needs in order to learn from a syllabus that relies on incidental vocabulary acquisition, discovery-based grammar instruction, and self-assessed progress checks. They need prior exposure to academic English from educated parents, English-medium media, private tuition, or a well-resourced primary school most likely in a large town or major city. They need sufficient word recognition automaticity to read the module texts fluently, freeing working memory for the comprehension and production tasks the lesson requires. They need enough Tier 2 vocabulary to understand teacher instructions that use words like identify, describe, compare, and appreciate. Without these prerequisites, the syllabus's activity-based, student-centred pedagogy does not empower students. It simply reveals who arrived already equipped and who did not.

The word recognition gap compounds everything that follows. Students who cannot decode words accurately and automatically cannot recognise words they have previously encountered in speech. Without word recognition, lexical semantics (the meaning of individual words) is inaccessible. Without lexical semantics, sentential semantics (meaning at the phrase and sentence level) breaks down. Without sentence-level comprehension, academic reading is impossible and without academic reading, Tier 2 vocabulary cannot be acquired even incidentally, because the texts that would use it cannot be processed. The failure of the syllabus to address word recognition is therefore not a localised gap in Module 1: it is the foundational condition that prevents every other gap from closing.

The Tier 2 vocabulary failure operates by a similar logic. Students from urban, well-resourced families with access to English media, educated parents, and private tuition have supplementary Tier 2 exposure that partially compensates for what the syllabus does not provide. They encounter words like significant, evidence, influence, and process in books, in conversation, and in tuition sessions. For these students, the syllabus's silence on Tier 2 is a gap their circumstances can bridge. For students from rural and under-resourced schools, those for whom the Grade 6 classroom is the primary, sometimes the only mechanism by which academic English could be acquired , the silence is absolute.

A syllabus that does not initiate the Tier 2 trajectory in upper primary and continue the trajectory from Grade 6 onwards is not making a neutral pedagogical choice. It is making a distributional one: it guarantees that the students who most need structured vocabulary instruction will not receive it, while the students who least need it are least affected by its absence.

The SoL gaps follow the same pattern. Discovery-based tasks, unscaffolded collaborative activities, and peer review routines that use feedback vocabulary students have not been taught all produce better outcomes for students who bring prior knowledge to the task. A student who has discussed grammar at home, who has read widely in English, or who has had explicit instruction elsewhere can draw on that knowledge to fill the gaps the lesson leaves open. A student without those resources encounters the same gaps as a ceiling. Placing collaboration and discovery at the core of instruction before foundational knowledge is secure does not democratise learning. It advantages those who already have the prerequisites and penalises those who do not.

Finally, the equity stakes of this syllabus extend further than school English examinations or even university access. AI literacy, that is, the ability to use artificial intelligence tools productively for learning, analysis, and professional work, is now a material determinant of economic participation. But AI literacy is entirely Tier 2 dependent. To prompt an AI tool precisely, a student must command words like summarise, analyse, evaluate, criteria, relevant, and context. To assess AI output critically, they need accurate, appropriate, bias, assumption, and implication. To communicate about AI use in academic or professional settings requires the full register of general academic English. A student operating only in Tier 1 vocabulary can consume AI output passively but cannot use AI as a tool for thinking, learning, or production.

The syllabus's 21st century classroom attributes of collaboration, creativity, digital literacy, lifelong learning implicitly promise access to this future. The Tier 2 gap it leaves unaddressed makes that promise structurally unreachable for the students who need it most. The students most likely to be excluded from AI-enabled participation are precisely those in under-resourced schools for whom the Grade 6 English lesson is the only available route to the academic language that participation requires.

4 AI-ASSISTED LESSON ANALYSIS AND REDESIGN

This chapter serves two purposes:

1. It illustrates the issues raised in Chapter 3 first by doing a deep dive evaluation of three lessons (one from each Module) and then rewriting each of the three lessons in accordance with SoR and SoL principles to illustrate what SoR and Sol compliance means in practical terms.
2. It demonstrates how AI can be used to analyse and rewrite the lessons. This means that the entire syllabus can meet the 2027 relaunch schedule and achieve its goals by bridging the gap in foundation literacy skills for Grade 6 students and ensuring that instructional design and practice is cognitively engineered to maximise learning.

In order to demonstrate the issues raised in Chapter 3, we used Claude AI to develop an evaluation tool that could be applied to each lesson in the syllabus to evaluate quality and completeness of instructional practice against each defined criterion. Appendix A contains the detailed SoL/SoR based tool with scoring rubrics for each criterion. The tool uses a six-domain rubric with four performance levels (Emerging, Developing, Proficient, Exemplary). We then asked Claude AI to apply the tool to a lesson from each Module that contained a significant literacy component and to rewrite each of the three lessons with annotation noting SoL / SoR principles and compliance.

The three selected lessons are:

- 'Me on the Map' (Module 1, Lesson 8) because it is the most writing-intensive lesson in Module 1.
- 'Inspiring Personalities' (Module 2, Lesson 7) because it is the richest reading-comprehension lesson.
- 'Our Pets' (Module 3, Lesson 3) because it involves sustained guided writing with grammar instruction.

These lessons reflect the curriculum's own emphasis: Module 1 is predominantly oral, Module 2 reading-focused, and Module 3 writing-focused. References to 'Tasks' are based on the Teacher's Guide lesson procedures.

Appendix B provides a binary inventory (Present / Partial / Absent) applied to all thirty lessons across the three modules. It evaluates *presence against a defined standard* or threshold. A lesson scores Absent when it does not meet the indicator's stated definition, even if related activity occurs. This benchmark evaluation clearly shows that the three case study lessons examined in depth are representative of the whole. [19]

The summary findings are presented first followed by the detailed rubric based evaluation of each lesson and the redesigned SoR/SoL compliant lesson.

[19] The two frameworks therefore sometimes produce different ratings for the same lesson feature. This reflects the difference between measuring quality of implementation (Appendix A) and measuring structural presence against a threshold (Appendix B). Where the two ratings diverge, the rubric score explains why a feature that scores Absent in the inventory (Appendix B) may nonetheless receive a Developing rather than an Emerging rating in this chapter using the Appendix A rubric, because partial or informal implementation exists even when it does not meet the inventory's defined standard.

4.1 Cross-Module Findings

4.1.1 Rubric scores - Modules 1-3

Domain	M1 L8 Me on the Map	M2 L7 Inspiring Personalities	M3 L3 Our Pets
1. SoR – Foundational Skills (max 24)	9 / 24 (38%)	9 / 24 (38%)	10 / 24 (42%)
2. SoR – Comprehension & Language (max 20)	11 / 20 (55%)	12 / 20 (60%)	10 / 20 (50%)
3. SoL – Cognitive Architecture (max 20)	11 / 20 (55%)	11 / 20 (55%)	10 / 20 (50%)
4. SoL – Retrieval & Practice (max 16)	6 / 16 (38%)	6 / 16 (38%)	7 / 16 (44%)
5. Assessment & Differentiation (max 16)	7 / 16 (44%)	10 / 16 (63%)	9 / 16 (56%)
6. Lesson Design & Coherence (max 16)	10 / 16 (63%)	12 / 16 (75%)	10 / 16 (63%)
TOTAL (max 112)	**54 / 112 (48%)**	**60 / 112 (54%)**	**56 / 112 (50%)**

4.1.2 What Is working well

- The prior knowledge activation sequences (especially Module 1 Lesson 8's warm-up and Module 2 Lesson 7's famous figures warmer) are excellent and should be maintained.
- The use of model texts (Yenuka's speech, Ben's paragraph, Tiki's description) across all modules is evidence-aligned. The revision needed is to add teacher think-alouds unpacking the models, not to remove them.
- The portfolio structure across the three modules is a genuine strength. It provides purpose, motivation, and continuity and communicatively it has real value. However, this should be leveraged more explicitly for formative assessment. [20]
- The text selection in Module 2 (authentic functional texts such as food wrappers, schedules, brochures, articles about inspiring people) is excellent. These are real-world texts with genuine reading purposes, which aligns with the curriculum's communicative aims.
- Module 3's attempt to link grammar instruction to writing purpose (teaching Simple Present Tense specifically because students need it to write descriptions) is the right instinct. The revision needed is to make the instruction more explicit, not to remove the connection.

4.1.3 Systemic issues

Issue 1: The Science of Reading is absent at the foundational level.

Across all three lessons, Domain 1 (Word Recognition Skills) scores between 38–42%. This is the lowest performing domain in every case. The Module 2 reading lessons (like Lesson 7) ask students to

[20] From an assessment standpoint portfolios generate retrospective evidence of what students produced, not diagnostic evidence of what they do not yet understand. A portfolio cannot tell a teacher that a student is consistently failing to decode multisyllabic words, or that their writing systematically avoids causal connectors. It can show a teacher a finished paragraph, but not the cognitive processes that produced it. Portfolios are the wrong kind of assessment tool to address the diagnostic gap. What is needed is frequent, low-stakes, teacher-verified assessment of specific skills: can this student read this word? Can this student write a sentence using because to express a reason? The portfolio captures the endpoint; what is missing is the formative tracking of the route.

read extended informational texts while providing no decoding support, no fluency modelling, and no error-correction protocol.

Issue 2: Absence of reading strategy instruction.

Module 2 is titled 'Reading for Life' and its ten lessons are all reading-focused. Yet in Lesson 7, the richest reading lesson in the module, there is no explicit reading strategy instruction. Students are asked comprehension questions across every task (pre-, while-, and post-reading) but the process of how to comprehend an informational text - how to locate main ideas, make inferences, use text features - is never modelled.

Issue 3: Cognitive load is consistently underestimated.

All three lessons attempt to teach multiple new skills within 50 minutes: Module 1 Lesson 8 requires vocabulary acquisition, sentence construction, writing and oral delivery simultaneously; Module 3 Lesson 3 requires grammar induction, vocabulary acquisition and paragraph writing.

The discovery-based grammar instruction approach in Module 3 is a particular concern. 'Do not discuss grammar rules before starting activities. Let the students discover the grammar rules while doing the activities.' This pedagogical approach places maximum cognitive demand on novice learners. They must hold multiple sentence patterns in working memory simultaneously while ‘discovering’ the rule.

Issue 4: Retrieval practice and spaced review are structurally absent

Domain 4 (Retrieval & Practice) scores 38–44% across all three lessons. This is the second lowest domain in every case. The curriculum has no systematic mechanism for retrieval practice or spaced review. Each lesson begins with a warmer that contextually activates knowledge but rarely requires structured recall from previous sessions. No lesson contains an entry quiz, vocabulary retrieval activity, or structured review of prior content.

Issue 5: Writing is consistently under-developed and under-assessed

The curriculum's progression from Module 1 (oral) to Module 3 (writing) is intentional. However, even in Module 3, writing instruction is heavily scaffolded by models and peer-checking, with no teacher explicit instruction on the craft of writing, no sentence-level instruction with corrective feedback, and no rubric-based assessment of student writing output. The peer-checking protocol in Lesson 3 ('check for errors') is unstructured and unlikely to produce meaningful improvement without clearer focus.

The SoR evidence base (Graham & Hebert, 2010; Hochman & Wexler, 2017) shows that explicit sentence-level writing instruction has strong effects on both writing quality and reading comprehension. For example, teaching students to construct and combine sentences, write a simple response to a text, make notes or summarise, and teaching the process of writing (narrative and other structures, paragraphs, sentences), are all evidence based instructional practices fir using writing to enhance reading (Graham & Hebert 2010:5). The current curriculum provides model texts but no sentence-level or higher level writing instruction other than copying model texts and changing individual words.

Issue 6: Formative assessment is reactive and generic

With the exception of Module 2 Lesson 7 (which has a designated formative assessment task), formative assessment across the lessons follows the pattern: 'record mistakes and provide general feedback at the end'. This is reactive (responding to errors after the fact), whole class (no individual

diagnosis), and delayed (feedback comes after all students have completed the task). Black & Wiliam's (1998B) formative assessment research is unambiguous: for feedback to improve learning, it must be specific, timely, and tied to clear learning criteria. None of these three conditions is consistently met.

4.2 Module 1, Lesson 8: 'Me on the Map'

4.2.1 Lesson summary

Focus: Writing a description of one's home area (village/district/province) and delivering it as a short speech.

Duration: 50 minutes. Skills labelled: Listening, Speaking, Writing.

Learning Outcomes: LO 1.3 (Listens to a simple informational text and extracts information); LO 1.4 (Uses the information conveyed); LO 2.3 (Talks about areas of interest).

Tasks: 8.A Warmer (recall village/district/province), 8.1 Listen & Show (word card activity with place names), 8.2 Listen & Complete (fill blanks from a speech), 8.3 Time to Talk (write then deliver a speech using a model). No explicit writing formative assessment in this lesson — writing is a stepping stone to speech delivery.

4.2.2 Criterion-by-criterion evaluation

Domain 1: Science of Reading – Foundational Skills

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Phonological Awareness	**1 – Emerging**	Not applicable in this lesson. No attention to sound structure. The ESL context means this domain is less directly relevant but decoding support for place-name vocabulary (Anuradhapura, Batticaloa) would benefit many students.
Phonics & Decoding	**1 – Emerging**	No phonics instruction. Students encounter unfamiliar proper nouns and geographic vocabulary with no decoding scaffolding. The word-card activity (Task 8.1) relies on students already knowing how to read the words.
Fluency Development	**2 – Developing**	Students deliver a short speech from memory but can read from prepared work if needed. However, fluency is not an explicit goal; no modelling of prosodic features, no timed oral reading using a relevant authentic text, no re-read practice.
Orthographic Knowledge	**1 – Emerging**	Writing is required (Task 8.3) but no attention / focus is given to spelling, morphology or orthographic features of the target vocabulary (geographical nouns, 'there is/are'). Students are copying from the Task 8.2 script except for insertion of place names.
Word Recognition Automaticity	**1 – Emerging**	No fluency-building word reading practice. The warm-up activity calls on students to 'show the relevant word card' which is recognitive rather than automatic reading.
Avoidance of Counterproductive Practices	**3 – Proficient**	No three-cueing or meaning-first guessing strategies are used. The lesson does not model phonics correction but neither does it encourage guessing from context.

DOMAIN 2: SCIENCE OF READING – COMPREHENSION & LANGUAGE

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Vocabulary Instruction	**2 – Developing**	Geographic vocabulary (province, district, village) is contextualised but not explicitly taught using evidence-based methods. No semantic mapping, no definition practice, no Tier 2 vocabulary attention (e.g., 'located', 'situated', 'border').
Background & Domain Knowledge	**3 – Proficient**	The lesson draws on students' own geographic knowledge (village, district, province) as prior knowledge — a genuine strength. The warm-up activates this systematically.
Comprehension Strategy Instruction	**2 – Developing**	Students listen to a model speech (Task 8.2) and use it as a comprehension input but no explicit strategy (e.g., note-taking, identifying text structure) is taught. Comprehension is implicit.
Text Complexity & Selection	**2 – Developing**	The listening text (Yenuka's speech, ~4–5 sentences) is very simple. It serves as a model but offers limited text complexity or intellectual challenge. No authentic text is used.
Oral Language & Discussion	**2 – Developing**	Whole-class discussion in the warmer is structured. However, no sentence frames are provided for the oral delivery phase, and the structured academic talk element is thin — students speak individually rather than in extended dialogic exchange.

DOMAIN 3: SCIENCE OF LEARNING – COGNITIVE ARCHITECTURE

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Cognitive Load Management	**2 – Developing**	Lesson requires students to simultaneously learn geographic vocabulary, produce original sentences, and plan/deliver a speech in 50 minutes. This is a heavy cognitive demand with limited chunking. Writing and speaking are conflated.
Explicit Instruction Sequence	**2 – Developing**	A model speech is provided (Yenuka's), which is a partial 'I Do'. But the shift from listening to independent production (Task 8.3) is rapid — 'We Do' guided practice is absent. Students move from model directly to 'You Do'.
Worked Examples & Modelling	**2 – Developing**	Yenuka's written speech model is present in the student workbook. However, no teacher think-aloud is prescribed; the guide simply says 'Use Yenuka's speech as a model', with no metacognitive unpacking of what makes it a good model.
Dual Coding	**2 – Developing**	The word card activity (Task 8.1) has visual elements (showing cards). A map would naturally support dual coding here but is not specified. The lesson is predominantly auditory/verbal.
Prior Knowledge Connection	**3 – Proficient**	Explicit connection to prior learning: the warm-up uses knowledge collected in Take Home Activity 7 (previous lesson). This is a genuine strength — prior work is built on, not repeated.

Domain 4: Science of Learning – Retrieval & Practice

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Retrieval Practice	**2 – Developing**	The warm-up involves recalling village/district/province — low-level retrieval. No structured retrieval from the lesson's own learning occurs. No exit quiz or end-of-lesson recall.
Spaced Review	**2 – Developing**	Connection to previous lessons is made via Take Home Activity 7. However no structured review of prior module vocabulary or language structures appears in the lesson design.
Interleaving	**1 – Emerging**	All tasks follow a single task type (listen/model/produce) sequentially. No mixing of skill types or strategic variation in practice.
Elaborative Interrogation	**1 – Emerging**	Questions in the lesson are confirmatory ('What did you do?') not elaborative. Students are not asked to explain why a speech works, why words are used, or how to improve their writing.

Domain 5: Assessment & Differentiation

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Formative Assessment	**1 – Emerging**	There is no designated formative assessment in this lesson. The teacher is told to 'record mistakes and provide general feedback'. This is reactive, not systematic. No check-for-understanding gates before Task 8.3.
Objective Alignment	**2 – Developing**	The objective (write and deliver a description of your area) is clear and all tasks move towards it. However, the writing component is subordinated to the oral delivery goal — whether students have understood or can transfer the writing skill is not assessed.
Scaffolding & Differentiation	**2 – Developing**	A Help box (vocabulary and sentence frames) is referenced. Students who 'struggle to memorise' may read from their notes. Beyond this, no differentiation plan for lower-readiness or ELL students.
Error Analysis & Feedback	**2 – Developing**	'Record mistakes and provide general feedback at the end' is the only feedback guidance. This is whole-class and delayed — no in-the-moment corrective feedback protocol and no individual written feedback on the writing produced.

Domain 6: Lesson Design & Coherence

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Lesson Structure & Pacing	**2 – Developing**	The structure is logical (listen → model → produce), but pacing is problematic. Task 8.3 asks students to plan, draft, revise and deliver a speech — an enormous demand for the final ~20 minutes of a 50-minute lesson. No time allocations are given.
Curriculum Coherence	**3 – Proficient**	Lesson fits naturally in the Module 1 sequence; content from previous lessons (greetings, abilities, preferences) is contextually present. Connection to Module 3 writing skills is implicit but not stated.
Student Engagement & Motivation	**3 – Proficient**	Writing about one's own geographic identity is genuinely relevant and personal. The portfolio purpose (students collect their work across the module) provides motivational continuity.

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Materials & Resource Quality	**2 – Developing**	The model speech is a useful resource. However, there are no decodable texts, no high-quality trade texts, and no structured literacy materials. Materials are adequate but not exemplary.

DOMAIN SCORE SUMMARY

Domain	Max	Score	%
1. SoR – Foundational Skills	24	**9**	**38%**
2. SoR – Comprehension & Language	20	**11**	**55%**
3. SoL – Cognitive Architecture	20	**11**	**55%**
4. SoL – Retrieval & Practice	16	**6**	**38%**
5. Assessment & Differentiation	16	**7**	**44%**
6. Lesson Design & Coherence	16	**10**	**63%**
TOTAL	**112**	**54**	**48%**

Overall Verdict: Module 1 Lesson 8 – DEVELOPING (48% / 54 points out of 112)

1. This lesson has genuine strengths: it is personally relevant, activates prior knowledge effectively, and uses a model text.
2. Critical weaknesses: The foundational skills domain is almost entirely absent. Retrieval and formative assessment are minimal.
3. The most pressing issue is that writing and oral delivery are collapsed into one rushed final activity, leaving neither skill properly developed. It may be that the intention is for students to simply copy the model speech, but this would raise other significant issues with other scores so this evaluation assumes they will not be copying.
4. Priority for revision: Separate the writing lesson from the speaking lesson. Give writing its own 50-minute session with explicit instruction, guided practice, and formative assessment.

4.2.3 Revised lesson plan: Module 1, Lesson 8 – 'Me on the Map'

The following revised lesson plan addresses the principal weaknesses identified in the evaluation. The key restructuring decisions are:

1. Separate writing from oral delivery. This lesson focuses on writing only.
2. Add explicit vocabulary pre-teaching.
3. Introduce a teacher-led modelling phase before independent writing.
4. Build in structured formative assessment of the written product.
5. Add a brief retrieval opener.

The oral delivery component is recommended as a follow-up 15–20 minute activity in the next module lesson.

Drawing on The Writing Revolution (Hochman & Wexler, 2017), Module 3 should include sentence-combining, sentence-expanding, and error-correction activities at the sentence level before students attempt paragraph writing. Specific additions:

- Lesson 1 (Filling Forms): Add a sentence-level activity: students combine two short sentences about themselves using 'and' and 'but'
- Lesson 3 (Our Pets): Before Task 3.5, add a 'sentence expansion' warm-up: teacher provides a bare sentence ('The dog runs.') and students expand it using adjectives and adverbs from their vocabulary journal
- Lesson 5 (Memories of Events): Use 'Because/But/So' sentence frames for elaboration of past event descriptions

Revised Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:
1. Read and understand a model description of a place (comprehension objective).
2. Use key vocabulary (village, district, province, located, bordered by, famous for) accurately in sentences.
3. Write a structured 5–7 sentence description of their home area using a sentence-frame scaffold.
4. Edit their own writing for subject-verb agreement and capitalisation of proper nouns.
Aligned LOs: 1.3, 1.4 (Listening/information extraction), 4.1 (Writing a short description)
Note: Oral delivery of this writing is the focus of the NEXT lesson's opening 15 minutes (Module 1 Lesson 9 speaking warm-up).

Phase	Time	Activity	Skills	SoR / SoL Rationale
1. Retrieval Opener	5 min	Brain dump: Students write on a mini whiteboard or piece of paper as many place names (village, district, province names) as they can recall from previous lessons. Pairs compare. Teacher elicits 3–4 from the class.	*Writing, Speaking*	*Low-stakes retrieval from prior learning. Activates geographic vocabulary before it is needed. Reduces intrinsic load for subsequent tasks.*
2. Vocabulary Pre-teaching (I Do / We Do)	8 min	Teacher explicitly introduces 6 target words: village, district, province, located, bordered by, famous for. For each: show word card, give pronunciation, give definition, show example in a sentence, ask class to repeat, ask concept-checking question ('Is Colombo a village or a province?'). Students copy 6 words with meanings into vocabulary journal.	*Listening, Speaking, Writing*	*Tier 2 vocabulary must be pre-taught before students encounter it in text/production. Concept-checking questions confirm meaning, not just echo. Vocabulary journal supports spaced retrieval in future lessons.*
3. Model Text Analysis (I Do)	10 min	Teacher reads Yenuka's speech aloud with expression. Class follows in workbook. Teacher then does a 3-minute think-aloud: 'Notice how Yenuka starts with a sentence about his country. Then he moves to province, then district, then village — from big to small. That is a text structure called general to specific. Now notice this sentence: My village is located near… — he uses the word located. Let's underline all the vocabulary words we just learned.' Students underline with teacher guidance. Class annotates the text structure on the board together	*Reading, Listening*	*Worked example with explicit teacher think-aloud (Science of Learning). Text structure is made visible — a comprehension and writing strategy taught simultaneously. Dual coding: verbal model + visual annotation on board.*

Phase	Time	Activity	Skills	SoR / SoL Rationale
		(Country → Province → District → Village → Special feature).		
4. Guided Writing (We Do)	7 min	Teacher writes first two sentences of a class description on the board together: 'I live in [country]. My country is Sri Lanka.' Then displays sentence frame scaffold on board (or students use Help box): 'My province is ___. My district is ___ and it is located ___. My village is ___. My village is famous for ___.' Teacher completes ONE sentence with a student volunteer, thinking aloud. Students then complete the same two sentences individually about their own area.	*Writing, Speaking*	*Gradual release — teacher models before students attempt. Sentence frames reduce cognitive load by holding structure constant while students fill content. Two sentences only = manageable chunk.*
5. Independent Writing (You Do)	12 min	Students complete their own 5–7 sentence description independently using the sentence-frame scaffold and vocabulary journal. Teacher circulates, giving targeted individual feedback: (1) corrects capitalisation of proper nouns, (2) checks vocabulary word usage, (3) marks one specific error per student with a correction symbol (SP = spelling, V = vocabulary, ? = unclear). Students who finish early add an extra sentence about what their area is famous for without using the frame.	*Writing*	*Sufficient time for independent production. Targeted in-the-moment feedback (not end-of-lesson general feedback). Error coding gives actionable individual feedback. Extension task challenges faster writers without whole-class waiting.*
6. Structured Peer Edit (You Do / Check)	5 min	Students swap with a partner. Partner checks THREE things using a checklist on the board: (1) Are all place names capitalised? (2) Are the 6 vocabulary words used correctly? (3) Does the description go Country → Province → District → Village? Partner ticks or writes one suggestion. Writers revise one thing based on feedback.	*Reading, Writing*	*Structured peer editing (not just 'find errors'). Checklist focuses attention on the lesson's specific learning objectives. Immediate revision embeds the feedback — not just received and ignored.*
7. Formative Assessment Exit Task	3 min	Teacher reads aloud ONE sentence with an error (e.g., 'My village is located near the river.'). Students write the corrected sentence and hold it up. Teacher scans for comprehension and notes who needs support next lesson.	*Listening, Writing*	*Exit task provides whole-class formative data in 3 minutes. Error analysis informs next lesson planning. Retrieval practice effect: students must apply the lesson's grammar/vocabulary to a new sentence.*

Differentiation Notes for Revised Lesson

- Lower-proficiency / ELL students: Provide a partially completed frame with 2–3 words pre-filled per sentence. Teacher pairs these students with a more proficient peer during Tasks 5 and 6.
- Higher-proficiency students: Remove the sentence frame scaffold after Task 4. Extension: write an additional paragraph about one special feature of their area without frames.
- Students without a fixed village (e.g., recently relocated): Substitute 'a place I know well' for village — the text structure remains the same.
- Oral delivery: This is moved to the opening 15 minutes of the NEXT module lesson (Module 1 Lesson 9), when students are more confident with their written text as a support script.

SoR / SoL Alignment for Revised Lesson

- Science of Reading: Vocabulary pre-teaching (6 words, before reading), model text with annotation, explicit text structure instruction
- Cognitive Load Theory: Sentence frames hold structural load constant; chunking (2 sentences at a time); single task per phase
- Gradual Release: I Do (teacher think-aloud) → We Do (class writes first 2 sentences together) → You Do (independent paragraph)
- Worked Examples: Yenuka's speech is unpacked with teacher think-aloud, not just 'use as a model'
- Formative Assessment: Structured peer edit with checklist; 3-minute exit task generates diagnostic data
- Retrieval Practice: Retrieval opener; exit task applies lesson vocabulary/grammar to a new sentence

4.3 Module 2, Lesson 7: 'Inspiring Personalities'

4.3.1 Lesson summary

Focus: Extracting specific information from simple informational texts (articles from children's pages of newspapers) about inspiring world figures.

Duration: 50 minutes. Skills labelled: Speaking, Reading.

Learning Outcomes: LO 3.3 (Reads a simple informational text and extracts information); LO 3.4 (Uses its information appropriately).

Tasks: 7.1 Warmer (identify world-famous figures from pictures), 7.2 Look & Identify (pre-reading with images), 7.3 Read & Find (while-reading comprehension), 7.4 Read & Find post-reading group discussion, 7.5 Read & Find – Formative Assessment 2 (individual comprehension task). The lesson is the most reading-dense in Module 2.

4.3.2 Criterion-by-criterion evaluation

Domain 1: Science of Reading – Foundational Skills

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Phonological Awareness	**1 – Emerging**	No PA instruction. At Grade 6 (age 11–12) in an ESL context, PA is less critical than at primary; however, student reading accuracy in English is not addressed.
Phonics & Decoding	**1 – Emerging**	Students are asked to 'mark difficult words as they read' and then 'elicit meanings from them'. No decoding strategies are modelled. Students who cannot decode multi-syllabic words (e.g., 'personality', 'inspiration') have no strategy support.

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Fluency Development	**1 – Emerging**	No oral reading or fluency component. All reading is silent. No teacher modelling of fluent reading. Prosody and expression are not addressed anywhere in the lesson.
Orthographic Knowledge	**2 – Developing**	Vocabulary attention is present ('Know it', 'Word bank', 'Language note' boxes referenced). However morphological analysis of unfamiliar vocabulary is not taught systematically.
Word Recognition Automaticity	**1 – Emerging**	No practice for automaticity. Unfamiliar vocabulary is handled by 'eliciting meanings' orally rather than building independent word-reading strategies.
Avoidance of Counterproductive Practices	**3 – Proficient**	No guessing strategies promoted. The lesson relies on student comprehension of connected text, which is appropriate. No harmful practices identified.

DOMAIN 2: SCIENCE OF READING – COMPREHENSION & LANGUAGE

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Vocabulary Instruction	**2 – Developing**	Word bank and Know it boxes are referenced, which provides vocabulary exposure. However no systematic pre-teaching of key Tier 2/3 words before reading occurs. Vocabulary is handled reactively (students mark words they don't know while reading).
Background & Domain Knowledge	**3 – Proficient**	The warmer deliberately activates prior knowledge about world-famous figures. Group discussion about 'what each person is famous for' before reading is an evidence-aligned pre-reading strategy. This is a genuine strength.
Comprehension Strategy Instruction	**2 – Developing**	Students answer comprehension questions before and after reading but no strategy is explicitly named or taught (e.g., 'This is how we make inferences', 'This is how we identify main ideas'). The tasks practise comprehension without teaching it.
Text Complexity & Selection	**3 – Proficient**	Informational texts about real, globally significant figures (implied to include scientists, athletes, historical figures) represent appropriate complexity for Grade 6. The connection to children's newspaper pages is authentic and knowledge-building.
Oral Language & Discussion	**2 – Developing**	Group work is used throughout but the discussion tasks are primarily comprehension questions rather than structured academic talk. No sentence frames or talk protocols to extend academic language.

DOMAIN 3: SCIENCE OF LEARNING – COGNITIVE ARCHITECTURE

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Cognitive Load Management	**2 – Developing**	Students read multiple short passages about different figures in the same lesson. Switching between figures and texts simultaneously is cognitively demanding. No explicit chunking or processing pause is prescribed between texts.
Explicit Instruction Sequence	**2 – Developing**	Pre-reading activates knowledge, while-reading targets comprehension, post-reading extends thinking. This follows a broadly sensible structure. However, the teacher's role in the 'I Do' phase is absent — no modelling of how to read an informational text is described.
Worked Examples & Modelling	**1 – Emerging**	No teacher modelling of the reading process. The guide simply says, 'ask them to read the passages and mark the difficult words'. A think-aloud demonstrating how a skilled reader approaches an informational text would significantly improve this.
Dual Coding	**3 – Proficient**	The use of photographs of famous figures (pre-reading pictures, Task 7.2) before reading the text is a strong dual-coding move — visual images activate prior knowledge and support comprehension of the verbal text.
Prior Knowledge Connection	**3 – Proficient**	Warmer explicitly surfaces what students already know about famous figures. Module 2's thematic thread (Reading for Life) means students arrive with experience of reading functional texts from earlier lessons.

DOMAIN 4: SCIENCE OF LEARNING – RETRIEVAL & PRACTICE

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Retrieval Practice	**2 – Developing**	Task 7.5 (Formative Assessment 2) requires students to answer comprehension questions individually — a form of retrieval practice. However, this is the only structured retrieval in the lesson. No entry retrieval from previous lessons.
Spaced Review	**1 – Emerging**	No review of vocabulary or content from Lessons 1–6 of Module 2. The lesson begins immediately with new content. Given that Module 2 has been running for several weeks (interleaved), spaced review of reading strategies or vocabulary would significantly strengthen retention.
Interleaving	**1 – Emerging**	All tasks are comprehension tasks on informational texts. No mixing with other text types or task types from earlier in the module (e.g., revisiting a functional text alongside an informational text would interleave reading skills).
Elaborative Interrogation	**2 – Developing**	A 'Thinking Space' box is referenced in Task 7.4 which invites students to connect readings to their own experiences and ideas. This is a token gesture toward elaborative interrogation but is not structurally enforced or guided.

DOMAIN 5: ASSESSMENT & DIFFERENTIATION

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Formative Assessment	**3 – Proficient**	Task 7.5 is explicitly designated Formative Assessment 2, with time allocation (10 minutes) and feedback instructions. This is the most clearly structured formative assessment in any of the three selected lessons, although this is to be expected as it is specifically designated as a formative assessment task for Module 2.
Objective Alignment	**3 – Proficient**	Objective (extract specific information from informational texts) is consistently reflected across all four tasks. The formative assessment directly tests the lesson's stated learning outcome. Strong alignment.
Scaffolding & Differentiation	**2 – Developing**	Group work provides peer scaffolding. Know it, Word Bank and Language Note boxes offer reference support. However no specific guidance for lower-proficiency students, no tiered questions, and no extension task for higher-proficiency students.
Error Analysis & Feedback	**2 – Developing**	Feedback is prescribed after Task 7.5 ('give feedback after marking their answers') but no feedback protocol or model answers are provided. Error patterns from comprehension answers are not used diagnostically.

DOMAIN 6: LESSON DESIGN & COHERENCE

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Lesson Structure & Pacing	**3 – Proficient**	Pre/while/post reading structure is logical and well-signalled. Multiple tasks at each phase prevent overload. Time allocation for formative assessment (10 minutes) is given — though allocations for other tasks are absent.
Curriculum Coherence	**3 – Proficient**	Lesson sits coherently in Module 2's reading sequence, progressing from functional texts (Lessons 1–5) to informational texts. It connects to the module's thematic goal of building a reading habit.
Student Engagement & Motivation	**3 – Proficient**	Inspiring real-world figures (scientists, athletes, historical personalities) is inherently engaging content. The gallery-style warmer (pictures of famous people) creates genuine curiosity before reading.
Materials & Resource Quality	**3 – Proficient**	Informational passages about real figures represent the strongest text selection in the three modules. Teaching aids (pictures of famous figures, Section 4) are provided. Materials are appropriate and knowledge-building.

DOMAIN SCORE SUMMARY

Domain	Max	Score	%
1. SoR – Foundational Skills	24	**9**	**38%**
2. SoR – Comprehension & Language	20	**12**	**60%**
3. SoL – Cognitive Architecture	20	**11**	**55%**
4. SoL – Retrieval & Practice	16	**6**	**38%**
5. Assessment & Differentiation	16	**10**	**63%**
6. Lesson Design & Coherence	16	**12**	**75%**
TOTAL	**112**	**60**	**54%**

Overall Verdict: Module 2 Lesson 7 – DEVELOPING (54% / 60 points out of 112)

1. This is the strongest of the three lessons evaluated. Its text selection is authentic and knowledge-building, and the pre-reading activation is well-designed.
2. Critical weakness: No teacher modelling of the reading process (reading strategy think-aloud). Students practise comprehension but are never shown HOW a proficient reader approaches an informational text.
3. The absence of explicit reading strategy instruction across the entire Module 2 is the most significant curriculum-level gap.
4. Priority for revision: Add a teacher-led reading think-aloud (I Do) before Task 7.3. Pre-teach 4–6 Tier 2 vocabulary items before students encounter them in the text.
5. Module 2 should include a dedicated reading strategy sequence — at least one lesson per three that explicitly teaches and models a strategy (summarising, questioning, making inferences, visualising). The current design provides rich reading texts but no teaching of how to read. A suggested sequence for Term 1:
   - Lesson 2: Teach 'Identify main idea vs detail' — teacher think-aloud with a functional text
   - Lesson 5: Teach 'Inference from visual + text clues' — using poster and schedule texts
   - Lesson 7: Teach 'Text structure in informational texts' — applied to the inspiring personalities articles
   - Lesson 9: Teach 'Visualise and summarise' — applied to poetry

4.3.3 Revised lesson plan: Module 2, Lesson 7 – 'Inspiring Personalities'

The following revised lesson plan addresses the principal weaknesses identified in the evaluation. The key restructuring decisions are:

- Add explicit Tier 2 vocabulary pre-teaching before students encounter the texts.
- Introduce a teacher-led reading strategy think-aloud (I Do) before independent reading.
- Replace unguided silent reading with a structured two-pass reading protocol.
- Upgrade the Thinking Space prompt with sentence frames and a model response.
- Add a retrieval opener drawing on vocabulary from earlier Module 2 lessons.

The lesson's genuine strengths — the picture warmer, the authentic informational texts, and the designated formative assessment task — are preserved and in several cases strengthened.

Note on Module 2 scope: This revised lesson should be understood as part of a module-level reading strategy sequence. The strategy taught here - text structure in informational texts - assumes that main idea vs detail (Lesson 2) and inference from visual and text clues (Lesson 5) have been taught in earlier lessons.

Revised Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:
1. Use 5 pre-taught Tier 2 words accurately in context (achievement, influence, overcome, inspire, despite).
2. Identify the text structure of a short informational paragraph (general statement → specific evidence → significance).
3. Extract specific information from two informational texts using the taught text structure as a reading guide.
4. Respond to an explanatory prompt using a provided sentence frame.

Aligned LOs: 3.3 (Reads a simple informational text and extracts information); 3.4 (Uses its information appropriately).

Phase	Time	Activity	Skills	SoR / SoL Rationale
1. Retrieval Opener	5 min	Teacher displays 5 words from Module 2 Lessons 1–6 on the board (e.g., nutritional, schedule, advertise, fable, moral). Students write a definition or example sentence for each from memory — no books. Pairs compare. Teacher briefly corrects two common errors on the board.	Writing, Speaking	*Spaced retrieval: converts the three-day interleaving gap into a consolidation event. Students must retrieve from long-term memory, not recognise. Immediate error correction prevents schema errors consolidating.*
2. Vocabulary Pre-teaching (I Do / We Do)	8 min	Teacher introduces 5 target words: achievement, influence, overcome, inspire, despite. For each: say the word and ask students to repeat; give a student-friendly definition; show the word in a sentence from the text they are about to read; ask a concept-checking question ("If someone overcomes a difficulty, do they give up or push through?"). Students record all 5 words in vocabulary journals with definition and syllable marking.	Listening, Speaking, Writing	*Vocabulary must be pre-taught before reading, not encountered cold. Concept-checking questions test meaning, not echo. Pre-loading the words reduces the decoding-plus-meaning burden when students encounter them in text — directly managing cognitive load.*
3. Reading Strategy: Text Structure (I Do)	10 min	Teacher projects or writes a short paragraph about a famous person on the board (a teacher-constructed example, not one of the lesson texts). Teacher reads aloud fluently, then does a 3-minute think-aloud: "I'm going to show you how informational texts about people are usually organised. Notice: this paragraph starts with a general statement about who this person is. Then it gives specific evidence — what they actually did. Then it says why it matters — the significance. That pattern — Who? → What did they do? → Why does it matter? — is called general-to-specific text structure. Knowing that pattern helps me know where to look for information." Teacher annotates the three sections on the board with colour coding. Students copy the three-part structure into their notebooks.	Reading, Listening	*Explicit reading strategy instruction: a named strategy is taught, modelled through teacher think-aloud, and made visible before students apply it. This is what transforms comprehension tasks into reading instruction. Dual coding: verbal explanation plus colour-coded structural annotation.*

Phase	Time	Activity	Skills	SoR / SoL Rationale
4. Guided Reading — First Passage (We Do)	8 min	Teacher directs students to the first informational passage in the workbook. Teacher reads the passage aloud once fluently while students follow. Teacher then asks: "Can you find the general statement? Underline it." Whole class responds; teacher confirms. "Now find the specific evidence — what did this person actually do? Circle it." Whole class responds; teacher corrects any errors. Teacher points out where the pre-taught vocabulary appeared in the text. Students answer Task 7.3 questions for this passage only.	Reading, Listening, Writing	*Gradual release — We Do phase: teacher and students work through the text together before students attempt independently. The two-pass structure (teacher read → student annotation) reduces decoding load on first pass and focuses attention on structure on second pass. In-the-moment correction before misconceptions consolidate.*
5. Independent Reading — Second Passage (You Do)	7 min	Students read the second passage independently, annotate the three-part text structure, and complete Task 7.4 comprehension questions. Teacher circulates, checking annotations and giving targeted individual feedback. Teacher notes which students cannot identify the general statement — this informs the following lesson's opening.	Reading, Writing	*Independent application of the taught strategy. Annotation requirement makes the cognitive process visible to the teacher, enabling genuine formative diagnosis rather than simply marking comprehension answers right or wrong.*
6. Upgraded Thinking Space (We Do → You Do)	8 min	Teacher displays an upgraded Thinking Space prompt: "Choose one person from today's texts. Write 3–4 sentences explaining what you find inspiring about them. Use this frame:" [Name] is inspiring because ___, despite ___. This shows that ___. I admire [him/her] because ___. Teacher demonstrates one completed response aloud for a different person not in the text. Students write their own response. Two volunteers share; teacher gives brief oral feedback on use of target vocabulary and connectors.	Writing, Speaking	*Sentence frames provide the structural scaffold that makes explanatory academic language accessible — reducing the linguistic load while maintaining the cognitive challenge. The teacher's own model response is the worked example; removing it from the task would require students to construct the register without instruction.*
7. Formative Assessment Exit Task (Task 7.5)	4 min	Individual task: teacher projects two comprehension questions on a new (unseen) short paragraph about a third famous person. Students answer in writing — no group discussion. Teacher collects or scans responses. Feedback given next Module 2 lesson.	Reading, Writing	*Individual formative data, not peer-assisted. The use of a new text transfers the reading strategy — if students can apply text structure annotation to a text they have not practised on, the strategy has been internalised. Error patterns inform the spaced review opener in the next Module 2 lesson.*

Differentiation Notes for Revised Lesson

- Lower-proficiency students: Provide the three-part annotation template as a printed grid (Who? / What did they do? / Why does it matter?) to lay over the passage. Reduce the Thinking Space sentence frame requirement to two sentences. Pair with a stronger reader during Phase 5.
- Higher-proficiency students: Remove the sentence frame scaffold in Phase 6. Ask them to write an additional sentence that compares the two people studied in the lesson using while or in contrast.
- Students unfamiliar with the people in the texts: The warmer (identifying famous figures from pictures, Task 7.1) serves this function — do not skip it even in the revised lesson, as prior knowledge activation is the lesson's strongest existing feature.

SoR / SoL Alignment for Revised Lesson

- Vocabulary pre-teaching: 5 Tier 2 words explicitly taught before reading, with concept-checking; pre-loaded into the vocabulary journal for spaced retrieval.
- Explicit reading strategy instruction: Text structure (general → specific evidence → significance) named, modelled through teacher think-aloud, and colour-coded before students apply it — this is the I Do phase the original lesson was missing entirely.
- Gradual release: I Do (teacher think-aloud on constructed example) → We Do (joint annotation of first passage) → You Do (independent annotation of second passage) → Exit task (transfer to new text).
- Cognitive load management: Two-pass reading protocol separates decoding from comprehension; vocabulary pre-loading removes the simultaneous decode-and-define burden; text structure annotation constrains the search space.
- Spaced retrieval: Retrieval opener revisits Module 2 vocabulary from prior lessons; exit task uses a new text to test strategy transfer; formative data feeds the next lesson's opener.
- Formative assessment: Exit task generates individual diagnostic data on strategy transfer, not just comprehension of practised texts.

4.4 Module 3, Lesson 3: 'Our Pets'

4.4.1 Lesson summary

Focus: Writing a short description (up to 50 words) of an animal, using Simple Present Tense with correct subject-verb agreement. This is Module 3's first sustained writing lesson and contains the most explicit grammar instruction of the three selected.

Duration: 50 minutes. Skills labelled: Speaking, Reading, Writing.

Learning Outcomes: LO 4.1 (Writes simple texts to convey feelings, thoughts, ideas and experiences). Performance Standards include writing a 50-word description and forming Simple Present Tense sentences.

Tasks: 3.A Warmer (name animals from picture cards), 3.1 Discussion (pre-writing talk), 3.2 Read & Find (grammar induction – discover Simple Present Tense rules from sentence columns), 3.3 Think & Find (singular verb formation), 3.4 Team Game (match adjective/noun pairs), 3.5 Time to Write (plan → write → peer edit → share). The lesson contains explicit grammar instruction — unusual in this curriculum.

4.4.2 Criterion-by-criterion evaluation

DOMAIN 1: SCIENCE OF READING – FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Phonological Awareness	**1 – Emerging**	No attention to phonological features of the target vocabulary (e.g., pronunciation of animal names, verb inflections). Spelling instruction is entirely absent despite students being asked to produce written text.
Phonics & Decoding	**1 – Emerging**	No phonics instruction. Several animal names (e.g., 'tortoise') are orthographically irregular and would benefit from explicit decoding attention.
Fluency Development	**2 – Developing**	In Task 3.4, students read a passage about 'Tiki, Ben's pet' and in Task 3.5 volunteers read their writing aloud. No fluency instruction but oral reading is present.
Orthographic Knowledge	**2 – Developing**	The lesson's grammar component (Tasks 3.2–3.3) addresses morphological changes in verb forms (run → runs, study → studies). This is meaningful orthographic knowledge relevant to writing. However, the instruction is inductive (discovery-based) without explicit teaching of the morphological rule.
Word Recognition Automaticity	**1 – Emerging**	No automaticity practice. The team game (Task 3.4) involves reading word cards and matching them, which is recognitive but not fluency-building.
Avoidance of Counterproductive Practices	**3 – Proficient**	No harmful practices. Grammar is taught through structured activities rather than random exposure or guessing.

DOMAIN 2: SCIENCE OF READING – COMPREHENSION & LANGUAGE

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Vocabulary Instruction	**2 – Developing**	Animal vocabulary and adjective vocabulary are introduced through picture cards and the matching game (Task 3.4). Task 3.4's adjective-noun matching cards show *along, soft, bushy, bright, brown, sharp, pointed, small* paired with *tail, teeth, skin, horns, ears, eyes, whiskers, fur*. These are all Tier 1 physical descriptors. Vocabulary instruction is incidental and not systematic — no definition instruction, no semantic organisation of new words.
Background & Domain Knowledge	**3 – Proficient**	Students are asked to connect writing to their own experience of pets — a genuine knowledge-activation strategy. The discussion (Task 3.1) elicits what students know about animals before writing.
Comprehension Strategy Instruction	**1 – Emerging**	No comprehension strategy is taught. The lesson is writing-focused, but a reading model ('Tiki' passage in Task 3.4) is present without any explicit reading strategy instruction attached to it.
Text Complexity & Selection	**2 – Developing**	The model passage (Ben's paragraph about Tiki) is very simple (~50 words). Appropriate for Grade 6 ESL writers as a model but provides limited text complexity for comprehension development.
Oral Language & Discussion	**2 – Developing**	Pre-writing discussion (Task 3.1) and group work throughout. No structured academic talk protocols or sentence frames for discussion of animal features.

DOMAIN 3: SCIENCE OF LEARNING – COGNITIVE ARCHITECTURE

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Cognitive Load Management	**2 – Developing**	The lesson attempts to simultaneously teach grammar (Simple Present Tense, subject-verb agreement), vocabulary (adjectives, animal nouns), and writing a paragraph. This multi-element load risks overwhelming lower-proficiency students. Each element is meaningful, but the cumulative demand is high.
Explicit Instruction Sequence	**2 – Developing**	Grammar activities (Tasks 3.2–3.3) function as a partial 'I Do' for the grammar knowledge students need. This is the closest example of explicit instruction in all of Module 3. But it is out of sequence (I do, we do, you do) and the we do step is absent. The passage about Tiki (Task 3.4) provides a model.
Worked Examples & Modelling	**2 – Developing**	Tiki's passage is a worked example of the target writing genre. However, no teacher think-aloud unpacks what makes it a good model, how the writer chose adjectives, or how verb agreement was applied. The guide notes only that students should 'follow Ben's paragraph as a model'.
Dual Coding	**2 – Developing**	Picture cards for animal identification are a dual-coding strength. The planning table (Task 3.5) structures thinking visually before writing. However, the model passage is purely verbal — annotating it to highlight grammar features and vocabulary choices would add visual-verbal integration.
Prior Knowledge Connection	**2 – Developing**	Take Home Activity referenced (bringing information about a pet or animal). However no explicit link is made to writing skills from Lessons 1 and 2 of Module 3 (filling forms, making lists), which also involved writing at the word/sentence level.

DOMAIN 4: SCIENCE OF LEARNING – RETRIEVAL & PRACTICE

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Retrieval Practice	**2 – Developing**	The warmer (naming animals from pictures) and Task 3.4 (team game) function as low-stakes retrieval of vocabulary. However, there is no retrieval of grammatical knowledge from earlier in the module sequence.
Spaced Review	**2 – Developing**	Module 3 Lessons 1–2 covered form-filling and list-making (simple sentence production). Task 3.5's writing draws on this but without explicit spaced retrieval of those prior skills.
Interleaving	**1 – Emerging**	Tasks are ordered linearly (vocabulary → grammar → model → write). No interleaving of skill types. An interleaved practice routine mixing simple present, simple past (from Module 3 Lesson 5, as preview or from Module 2 context) would strengthen learning.
Elaborative Interrogation	**2 – Developing**	A 'Thinking Space' question is referenced in Task 3.4 asking students about the adjectives in the Tiki passage. This is a genuine move toward elaboration. More structured why/how questions about word choices would strengthen this.

Domain 5: Assessment & Differentiation

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Formative Assessment	**2 – Developing**	Peer checking (Task 3.5) is prescribed — a positive feature. However, the peer-check is unstructured: students are told to 'check for errors' with no checklist, criteria, or error focus. No teacher formative assessment occurs in this lesson (the module's Formative Assessment 1 is in Lesson 4).
Objective Alignment	**3 – Proficient**	The lesson objective (write a 50-word description using Simple Present Tense) is present throughout. Grammar tasks (Tasks 3.2–3.4) all build toward the writing task. Strong alignment between grammar instruction and writing purpose.
Scaffolding & Differentiation	**2 – Developing**	Help box (vocabulary and sentence starters) is referenced. Planning table in Task 3.5 scaffolds writing. However, no guidance for students who cannot write 50 words, nor extension for those who can exceed this easily. ELL-specific scaffolding is absent.
Error Analysis & Feedback	**2 – Developing**	Peer checking is present. Teacher is told to 'move around the classroom and help students'. No protocol for error correction in writing. No model answers for grammar tasks. Individual written feedback is not described.

Domain 6: Lesson Design & Coherence

Criterion	Score	Evidence / Notes
Lesson Structure & Pacing	**2 – Developing**	The lesson is ambitious — grammar induction across Tasks 3.2 and 3.3 is substantive. Then Task 3.4 adds vocabulary. Task 3.5 requires planning, drafting, peer editing and sharing. This is approximately 5–6 distinct activities in 50 minutes. The pacing is likely unmanageable for most classes, especially given the complexity of the grammar induction approach.
Curriculum Coherence	**3 – Proficient**	Lesson 3 is well-positioned in Module 3's writing sequence. It develops single-sentence skills (Lessons 1–2) into paragraph writing and lays the grammar groundwork for Lessons 4 and 5.
Student Engagement & Motivation	**3 – Proficient**	Writing about personal pets or favourite animals is intrinsically motivating. The team game element (Task 3.4) adds competitive engagement. The gallery walk / volunteer sharing provides a real audience.
Materials & Resource Quality	**2 – Developing**	Picture cards and word cards are required (specified in Teaching Aids). The model paragraph (Tiki) is useful. However, literacy materials (decodable practice, structured spelling activities) are absent.

DOMAIN SCORE SUMMARY

Domain	Max	Score	%
1. SoR – Foundational Skills	24	**10**	**42%**
2. SoR – Comprehension & Language	20	**10**	**50%**
3. SoL – Cognitive Architecture	20	**10**	**50%**
4. SoL – Retrieval & Practice	16	**7**	**44%**
5. Assessment & Differentiation	16	**9**	**56%**
6. Lesson Design & Coherence	16	**10**	**63%**
TOTAL	**112**	**56**	**50%**

Overall Verdict: Module 3 Lesson 3 – DEVELOPING (50% / 56 points out of 112)

1. The grammar instruction component is a relative strength — purposefully embedding grammar teaching within a writing task is sound practice.
2. Critical weakness: The discovery-based grammar instruction model ('let students discover the rules') is theoretically appealing but cognitively demanding for novice learners with limited English. Explicit, teacher-led instruction would reduce cognitive load.
3. The peer editing in Task 3.5 is valuable but currently unstructured. A simple editing checklist tied to the lesson's grammar focus would transform it.
4. Priority for revision: Explicitly teach the grammar rule before students practise it (I Do). Provide a structured peer-editing checklist. Split the lesson to avoid pacing overload.

4.4.3 Revised lesson plan: Module 3, Lesson 3 – 'Our Pets'

The following revised lesson plan addresses the principal weaknesses identified in the evaluation. The key restructuring decisions are:

- Replace inductive grammar discovery with explicit grammar instruction (I Do) before practice.
- Add a teacher think-aloud unpacking the model passage before students write.
- Structure the peer editing with a specific checklist aligned to the lesson's grammar focus.
- Add a retrieval opener for vocabulary from Module 3 Lessons 1–2.
- Manage cognitive load by sequencing grammar instruction before paragraph writing. Grammar is secured first, then writing begins.

The lesson's genuine strengths — the personal topic, the planning table, the model passage (Tiki), and the link between grammar instruction and writing purpose — are preserved.

Revised Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:
1. State the Simple Present Tense rule for third-person singular verbs, including the -es and -ies spelling variants (the rule, not just examples).
2. Use at least 4 adjective-noun pairs from the lesson's vocabulary accurately in sentences.
3. Write a structured 5–7 sentence animal description using Simple Present Tense and the adjective-noun pairs.
4. Edit a partner's writing against a three-point checklist (verb agreement, adjective-noun accuracy, capital letters for proper nouns).
Aligned LOs: 4.1 (Writes simple texts to convey feelings, thoughts, ideas and experiences).
Performance Standards: 50-word description; Simple Present Tense with subject-verb agreement.

Phase	Time	Activity	Skills	SoR / SoL Rationale
1. Retrieval Opener	4 min	Teacher displays 6 words from Module 3 Lessons 1–2 on the board: full name, nationality, occupation, hobby, appearance, personality. Students write one sentence for each word from memory — without looking at previous work. Teacher elicits 3 answers and corrects any errors on the board.	Writing, Speaking	*Spaced retrieval from the previous two Module 3 lessons. Activates the form-and-list writing schema before extending it to paragraph writing. Immediate error correction on the board models the correction process students will use in peer editing later.*
2. Vocabulary: Adjective-Noun Pairs (We Do)	6 min	Teacher displays the 8 adjective-noun pairs from Task 3.4 (soft fur, bushy tail, sharp teeth, bright eyes, smooth skin, pointed horns, small ears, long whiskers). Teacher says each pair aloud; students repeat chorally. Teacher asks: "Which of these could describe a cat? A rabbit? A fish?" Students call out answers; teacher confirms or corrects. Students record the 8 pairs in vocabulary journals with a quick sketch or symbol for each.	Listening, Speaking, Writing	*Vocabulary pre-taught before the writing task — not encountered during it. Choral repetition establishes pronunciation and orthographic form simultaneously. The categorisation task activates prior knowledge and begins building the schema for the writing task. Vocabulary journal entry supports spaced retrieval in future lessons.*
3. Explicit Grammar Instruction (I Do)	8 min	Teacher writes two columns on the board: Left: I run / You run / We run / They run Right: He runs / She runs / It runs Teacher states the rule directly: "In Simple Present Tense, for he, she, and it — third person singular — we add -s to the verb. That is the rule. Now watch what happens with verbs ending in -y: study → studies. The y changes to I and we add -es. With verbs ending in -o, -ch, -sh, -ss, -x: we add -es: go → goes, catch → catches." Teacher writes 4 example verbs from the lesson topic on the board (eats, catches, sleeps, hides) and works through each aloud. Students copy the rule and examples. Teacher cold-calls 4 students: "What does catch become for 'it'?" Confirms or corrects each answer immediately.	Listening, Writing	*Explicit instruction: the rule is stated directly, not discovered. This is the I Do phase entirely absent from the original lesson. For novice learners, stating the rule first and then demonstrating it reduces cognitive load. The four comprehension checks confirm encoding before the lesson moves on.*

Phase	Time	Activity	Skills	SoR / SoL Rationale
4. Model Text Analysis (I Do → We Do)	8 min	Teacher reads Ben's paragraph about Tiki aloud with expression. Class follows in workbook. Teacher does a think-aloud: "Let me show you what Ben did well. His first sentence tells us the animal's name and what it is — that's the topic sentence. Then he describes what Tiki looks like using adjective-noun pairs from our list. Then he describes what Tiki does — and notice, he uses 'it' so every verb has an -s. Let me underline those." Teacher underlines the grammar features and circles the adjective-noun pairs on a projected copy. Teacher then displays a planning table on the board and completes two rows together with the class as a shared example using a familiar animal.	Reading, Listening, Writing	*Worked example with explicit teacher think-aloud: the cognitive process behind the model is made visible. This transforms Ben's paragraph from a passive reference into an active instructional tool. The joint planning table (We Do) bridges the model and independent writing.*
5. Independent Writing (You Do)	10 min	Students complete their own planning table and write their paragraph (5–7 sentences). Teacher circulates and gives targeted in-the-moment feedback using a consistent symbol system: ✓ = verb agreement correct; circle = check this verb; underline = check this adjective-noun pair. Students who finish early add one sentence using because to explain why they like this animal.	Writing	*In-the-moment targeted feedback prevents errors consolidating in long-term memory — this replaces the original lesson's end-of-lesson general feedback with specific, timely correction at the point of writing. The extension task requires a connector from the Tier 2 logical connectors sequence.*
6. Structured Peer Edit (You Do / Check)	6 min	Students swap with a partner. Partner uses a three-point checklist displayed on the board: (1) Does every verb with he/she/it have an -s or -es? Tick or circle. (2) Are the adjective-noun pairs used correctly? Tick or underline. (3) Does the paragraph have a topic sentence? Tick or write one in the margin. Partner writes one suggestion. Writers make one correction based on the checklist before sharing.	Reading, Writing	*Structured peer editing with explicit criteria replaces the unguided 'check for errors' instruction. The checklist focuses students on exactly what was taught in the lesson. Students must apply the grammar rule as a reader, not only as a writer, deepening consolidation.*
7. Share and Consolidate	4 min	Two or three volunteers read their paragraph aloud. After each, teacher asks: "Which adjective-noun pairs did you use? Does anyone spot a verb that needs an -s?" Class responds. Teacher notes one strength and one error from each paragraph on the board as a class reference.	Listening, Speaking	*Brief public retrieval and consolidation. The teacher's pattern-of-error note on the board gives the whole class diagnostic information about common mistakes — this becomes the opening retrieval task for the next Module 3 lesson.*
8. Exit Task	4 min	Teacher reads aloud two sentences with errors: "The rabbit have long ears. It eat carrots and sleep in a hutch." Students write the corrected versions and hold them up. Teacher scans and notes who	Listening, Writing	*Exit task provides individual formative data in 4 minutes. Applying the grammar rule to a new sentence — not the student's own writing — tests whether the rule has been internalised or only used with*

Phase	Time	Activity	Skills	SoR / SoL Rationale
		cannot apply the rule independently.		*support. Data informs the retrieval opener for the next Module 3 lesson.*

Differentiation Notes for Revised Lesson

- Lower-proficiency students: Provide a pre-filled planning table with two rows completed as examples. During peer editing, focus only on checklist point 1 (verb agreement). Pair with a student who has secured the grammar rule.
- Higher-proficiency students: Remove the planning table scaffold. Require a minimum of two connectors (because, although, however) in the paragraph. Extension: write a second paragraph about a different animal using a different text structure (problem → solution: My cat is sometimes difficult because… However…).
- Students without a pet: The original lesson already accommodates this — students may write about any animal they know or like. Maintain this flexibility; it does not affect the grammar or vocabulary instruction.

SoR / SoL Alignment for Revised Lesson

- Explicit grammar instruction: The Simple Present Tense rule is stated directly before students practise it. This is the single most consequential change — replacing inductive discovery with I Do instruction eliminates the cognitive overload that prevented novice learners from consolidating the rule.
- Vocabulary pre-teaching: Adjective-noun pairs established before writing begins, not encountered during it. Vocabulary journal entry supports spaced retrieval.
- Worked example with think-aloud: Ben's paragraph is explicitly unpacked rather than simply cited as a model — the teacher's think-aloud makes the decision-making process visible.
- Cognitive load management: Vocabulary first, grammar rule second, model analysis third, writing fourth. Each phase builds on the last rather than presenting all demands simultaneously.
- Gradual release: I Do (explicit grammar instruction + teacher think-aloud on model) → We Do (joint planning table) → You Do (independent paragraph) → Peer check (structured application of the rule as reader).
- Formative assessment: Structured peer editing checklist generates lesson-specific feedback; exit task generates individual diagnostic data on rule internalisation; teacher circulation replaces delayed whole-class feedback.
- Spaced retrieval: Retrieval opener revisits Module 3 Lessons 1–2 vocabulary; exit task errors become the retrieval opener for the next Module 3 lesson, creating an explicit retrieval loop across the interleaved schedule.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The design of a language learning and teaching program, as the new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus demonstrates, is anchored in research and evidence as shown in Figure 7. Research – basic and applied – in language acquisition and learning draws on multiple disciplines including education, psychology, linguistics, neuroscience, and cognitive theory. The approach and methods that are adopted in a particular context reflect assumptions and beliefs about language learning. These in turn are shaped by the particular learning and teaching context, as well as the interaction between policy and practice.

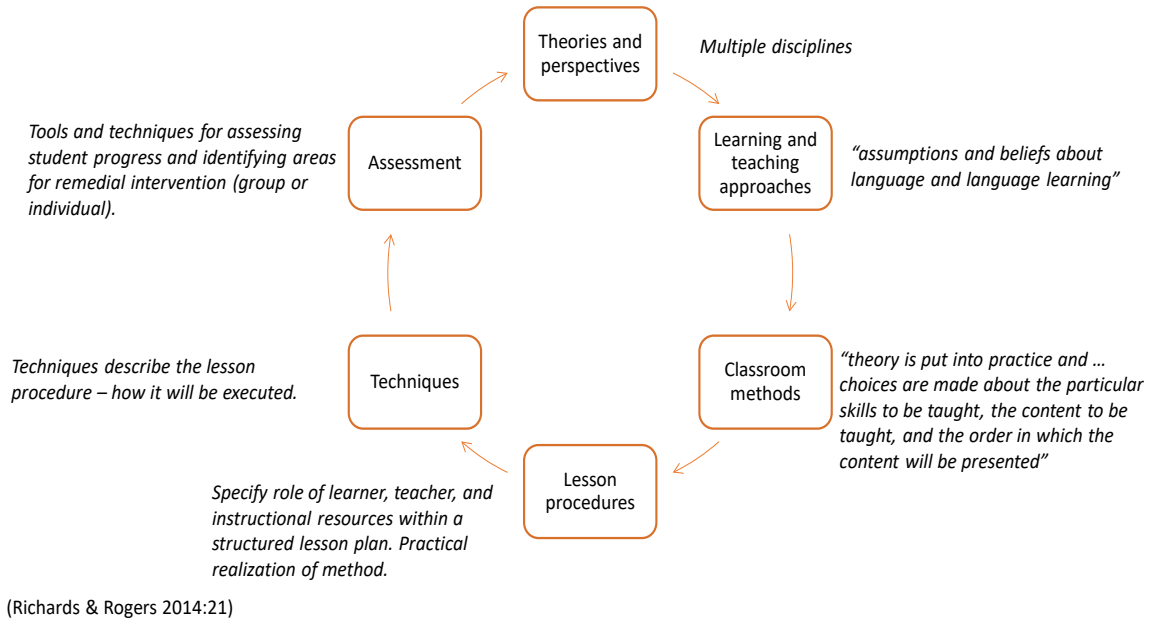

Figure 7 Learning and teaching design

A curriculum built on constructivist theory or philosophy naturally produces a discovery-led approach, topic-first method, facilitative lesson procedures, minimal-modelling techniques, and self-report assessment. The pieces are coherent.

The recommendations in this report are also internally coherent. The science is the starting point. Language is a biologically secondary knowledge system that requires explicit instruction for novice learners. Grade 6 students in Sri Lanka are novice academic English learners whose working memory is easily overloaded. Evidence-based instruction grounded in the Science of Reading and the Science of Learning show that for these students, the most effective approach is to provide explicit teaching before guided practice, which in turn precedes independent application (I Do–We Do–You Do). The four Cs of P21 remain the long-term destination, not the instructional starting point.

In terms of classroom methods, the thematic module structure can be retained but with an instructional architecture added. This means cumulative vocabulary threads within and across modules, explicit grammar sequences, phonics and fluency support where needed, and a retrieval loop connecting each module-thread lesson to the previous one in the same thread.

The flow-on implications for lesson procedures, techniques and assessment can be achieved through a retrofit strategy as outlined in this chapter and in more detail in Appendix D . Teachers are instructors

first, facilitators second — and the sequence matters. SoL and SoR as explicit-instruction theory produces a structured approach, sequenced method, modelled procedures, specific techniques, and assessment that closes the loop.

This chapter presents a strategy to retrofit changes to the new Grade 6 English syllabus. These changes are critical to realign instructional practice with the evidence-based research and ensure that the curriculum goals will in fact be achieved. The strategy is pragmatic given the extended curriculum cycle and the imperative to relaunch the new English syllabus for Grade 6 in 2027.

This strategy may also need to be applied to other new syllabi for English and, with regard to SoL, other subject areas where the same misalignment between syllabus and the science have been replicated.

More detail on the retrofit strategy is included in Appendices C and D. The strategy will require a rewrite of lesson procedures in the new Grade 6 English Language Teacher's Guide, but this can be done very quickly using AI and with the help of a skilled AI prompt engineer. Claude AI's own estimate is two weeks including checking and review. For a full breakdown of that estimate see Appendix E.

5.1 SoR Realignment Strategy

Vaughan (2024) has proposed a retrofit plan to add SoR foundation literacy skills in primary grades without changing the syllabus. But for students entering Grade 6 without this foundation, a tailored retrofit plan is needed. This can be implemented alongside the new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus.

Without strengthening reading foundations at Grade 6, Sri Lanka risks widening the gap between English policy aspirations and student outcomes.

The in previous chapters of the new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus indicates that what is required in terms of SoR foundations is not a rewrite, but a retrofit that makes two strands explicit and systematic as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 SoR Retrofit Strands

Strand 1: Word Recognition	Strand 2: Language Comprehension
1. Phonemic awareness repair (for older learners). 2. Systematic phonics (age-appropriate, fast-paced). 3. Spelling through dictation and word mapping. 4. Basic morphology (prefixes, suffixes, word families). 5. Reading fluency (short, structured rereading).	1. Structured Tier 2 (general academic) vocabulary development (lexical semantics). 2. Sentence-level comprehension and clause relationships (sentential semantics and syntax awareness). 3. Inferential and explanatory language use.

5.1.1 Word reading and word recognition skills

Given the current timeline for rollout of the new syllabus not only for Grade 6 but other grades as well, the pragmatic approach is a low-cost, non-disruptive retrofit of these critical literacy foundations to run alongside existing modules, without rewriting textbooks or altering stated curriculum goals. The one-year delay in introducing the new Grade 6 English syllabus allows time to pilot the retrofit and train teachers using PIMD's already in place online teacher training available free of charge through the University of Jaffna, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, and Colombo University.

In addition to being curriculum and syllabus neutral (no texts rewriting required), it should also be feasible from a teacher training and competence perspective, and to minimise timetable challenges, to use short, structured daily routines (10-15 minutes/day) plus short homework routines. The literacy foundation skills program would consist of:

1. Phonemic awareness repair (for older learners).
2. Systematic phonics (age-appropriate, fast-paced).
3. Spelling through dictation and word mapping.
4. Basic morphology (prefixes, suffixes, word families).
5. Reading fluency (short, structured rereading).

Screening assessments of literacy skills for all students entering grade 6 is recommended.[21] As the program progresses, to ensure progress, adjust instruction, and provide transparency, schools should track:

1. Decoding accuracy using simple word lists.
2. Oral reading fluency for short passages.
3. Spelling accuracy of taught patterns.
4. Vocabulary growth via word families[22].

An illustrative program is outlined in Appendix D. Instructional designers should first ensure that they themselves have an in depth understanding of SoR literacy skills (phonological awareness and phonics), as well as what is meant by systematic and explicit instruction, and how to use relevant assessment tools for diagnostic purposes, to design remedial intervention strategies, and assess progress in bridging gaps in knowledge and skills.[23]

This retrofit allows the general education system to:

- preserve the strengths of the new syllabus;
- correct a predictable structural weakness;
- protect national investments in English language education; and
- improve equity and long-term academic performance.

5.1.2 Language comprehension and lexical progression

Words need to be encountered in text, used in discussion, retrieved in writing, and recycled across lessons. But if the module texts are lexically light and topically constrained, where does the Tier 2 context come from? There are actually three workable sources, and they can be layered.

First, the module texts themselves can carry more Tier 2 load than they currently do if the *teacher's* language is deliberately upgraded. The student text doesn't change, but the teacher's questions, instructions, and feedback model Tier 2 vocabulary in context. This is low-cost and requires no new materials — just explicit guidance to teachers on which Tier 2 words to use orally in the lesson, and how.

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[21] There are a number of different screening tests available for phonological awareness and phonics which can be used at different stages. For an overview we recommend starting with the Reading Rockets website on the topic of screening and assessment (https://www.readingrockets.org/screening-and-assessment). BPST-III (Right to Read 2024) is a tool that can be used for older students from Grade 4 and up. For phonological awareness the PAST Test (PAST 2024) is simple and comprehensive to administer.

[22] A word family refers to the root word, plus extensions formed through affixes, and inflectional endings.

[23] PIMD offers as part of its teacher training curriculum on literacy instruction, a course on Screening, Monitoring, Assessment and Remedial Intervention (https://microdevpartners.org/screening-monitoring-and-assessment-of-literacy-skills-course/)

Second, short supplementary bridge texts, one or two paragraphs, purpose-written or carefully selected, can be attached to each module unit as a two-to-three-minute read-aloud or shared reading activity. These don't replace the module text; they sit alongside it and use the same topic but at higher lexical density. A lesson about pets becomes a short paragraph explaining *why animals are kept as companions and what research suggests about the effect of pets on human wellbeing*. This uses the same topic, but a different register. The Tier 2 vocabulary appears in a meaningful context the students already have background knowledge for.

Third, the vocabulary journal becomes an active production tool rather than a passive record, with structured sentence-writing tasks that require students to use the week's Tier 2 words in explanatory rather than descriptive sentences.

These three layers together solve the contextualisation problem without requiring new textbooks.

A more detailed program outline is provided in Appendix D including appropriate lists of Tier 2 words and word families, connecting words, and sample bridge passages.

5.2 SoL Realignment Strategy

Appendix C provides a complete revised set of implementation instructions that aligns with SoR and SoL. In summary, the key changes are as follows:

1. Add explicit instruction before discovery: Before any discovery-oriented lessons, teachers should model the rule or do explicit key vocabulary instruction, do worked examples with the class, and then do 'guided' discovery. This is consistent with the gradual release of responsibility method also known as I do-we do-you do.
2. Embed a module-thread retrieval loop: The Module / topic interleaved structure creates accidental spacing but no retrieval mechanism to convert that spacing into a memory benefit. The solution is not to abandon the interleaving which serves a legitimate purpose in keeping all macro-skills active but to retrofit a structured retrieval opener onto every lesson.

   At the start of each lesson, before any new content is introduced, teachers should spend 3–5 minutes on retrieval from the previous lesson of the same Module thread. When students arrive at Module 2 Lesson 3, for example, the opener retrieves vocabulary and structures from Module 2 Lesson 2, not from yesterday's Module 1 lesson.

   This 'module-thread retrieval loop' works with the interleaved timetable rather than against it: the three-day gap between lessons in the same Module thread becomes a genuine spacing interval, and the structured opener converts that gap into consolidation rather than forgetting.

   The retrieval task itself should require active recall such as writing definitions from memory, producing a sentence using a target structure, or reconstructing a word from its syllables, but not recognition tasks such as matching or circling.

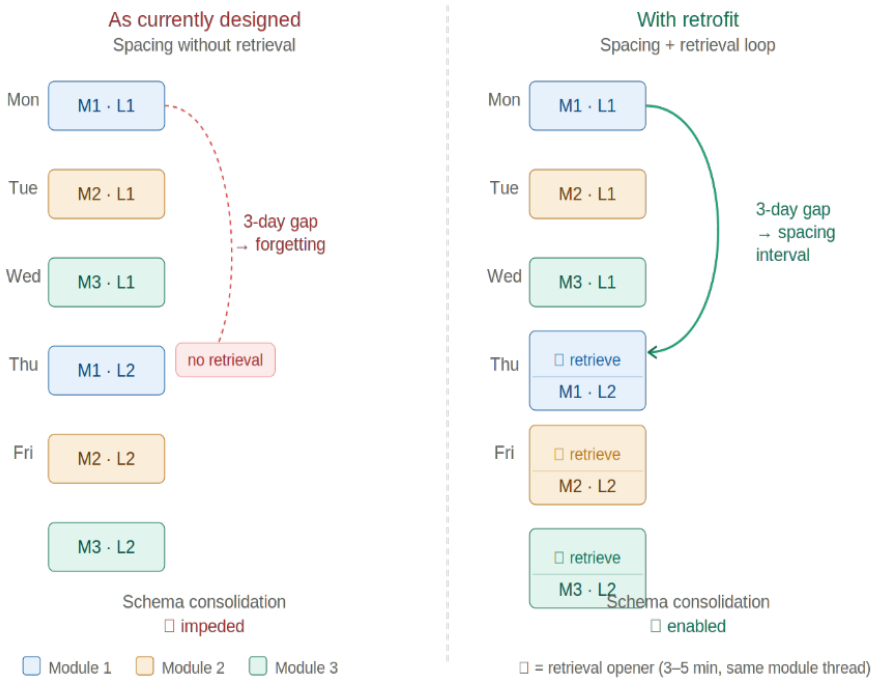

Figure 8 Current vs retrofit spaced retrieval

3. Specify a cross-module consolidation routine: In addition to module-thread retrieval openers, one lesson per week should include a brief cross-module vocabulary consolidation activity (10 minutes). Students retrieve key words and structures from all three Module threads covered that week, using a cumulative retrieval sheet maintained in their learning folder.

   The sheet has one column per Module, updated each lesson with three to five target words and one model sentence. Over the term this sheet becomes a self-testing tool and makes the retrieval practice visible to the teacher. For example:

   - The Module 1 lesson opens with a retrieval loop from the previous Module 1 lesson.
   - The Module 2 lesson opens with a retrieval loop from the previous Module 2 lesson.
   - The Module 3 lesson opens with a cross-module consolidation review drawing from all three threads.

   This costs minimal additional timetable time, requires no textbook revision, and directly addresses the schema fragmentation that the topic based interleaved structure otherwise produces.
4. Include cognitive load safeguards: There is reference to dealing with different levels of learners but no mention of scaffolding, sequencing of learning steps, or differentiated instruction. It is essential to review the number of new elements per lesson and scaffold the learning, gradually removing scaffolds as students' progress.
5. Make feedback more instructional: Errors must be immediately corrected and any patterns of errors highlighted and correct examples modelled. The formative feedback loop must also be closed so that assessments are used by the student and teacher to understand gap relative to goal and how to proceed.

6 CONCLUSION

The new Grade 6 English curriculum and syllabus is a genuine attempt at reform. Its thematic organisation, its attention to learner confidence, and its aspiration to develop students who can communicate in English for real life purposes all reflect sound educational instincts. PIMD does not dispute those goals. What this report has shown, in detail and with evidence, is that the instructional design of the syllabus as it stands will not achieve them.

The problems are structural, not incidental. When a syllabus assumes that constrained reading skills are already secure, that vocabulary grows through exposure, that grammar self-corrects through use, and that novice learners are best served by discovery rather than instruction, it is not making neutral pedagogical choices. It is making choices that conflict with decades of converging evidence from cognitive science, linguistics, and classroom research, evidence that is now reflected in curriculum policy across the English-speaking world and beyond. The result, predictably, is a syllabus that is motivationally engaging but cognitively under-powered: one that will work well for students who already have the literacy foundations and vocabulary resources to learn from exposure, and poorly for those who do not, which is most.

That inequity is the sharpest edge of this critique. English in Sri Lanka is not simply a school subject. It is the primary gate to tertiary education and to the professional employment that follows. A student who reaches university without having crossed the lexical bar, that is, without sufficient Tier 2 vocabulary and reading fluency to access academic texts independently, faces a triple burden: learning new content, learning academic English, and adapting to independent study, simultaneously and without support. That burden falls disproportionately on students from rural schools, under-resourced communities, and families who cannot supplement inadequate instruction with private tuition. It is precisely this failure that drives the remediation programmes in Sri Lanka's university English departments today.

Grade 6 is not too early to be thinking about this. Given that the 2022 Proposed English Language Curriculum already specified Tier 2 vocabulary instruction from Grade 3, Grade 6 may already be too late for many students. The question this new Grade 6 syllabus should be answering is: how do we accelerate lexical development from here?

Figure 9 shows the skills progression from Grade 1-12 that needs to be operationalised in the new curriculum and syllabi for English across all grades. The good news is that none of this requires starting again. The curriculum goals are sound. The module topics and texts can remain. The three-module interleaved structure has genuine pedagogical logic. What the syllabus needs is a retrofit that is targeted, specific, and achievable within the window before the 2027 launch. The three components of that retrofit, detailed in Chapter 5 and Appendices C and D, are:

- a daily literacy foundations strand for students whose word recognition skills remain insecure;
- an explicit Tier 2 vocabulary instruction layer embedded into existing lessons without new textbooks; and
- a SoL-aligned instructional architecture that adds an explicit teaching opener, a module-thread retrieval loop, and structured feedback protocols to existing lesson procedures.

None of these require curriculum rewriting. All of them can be developed rapidly with AI assistance as this report itself demonstrates.

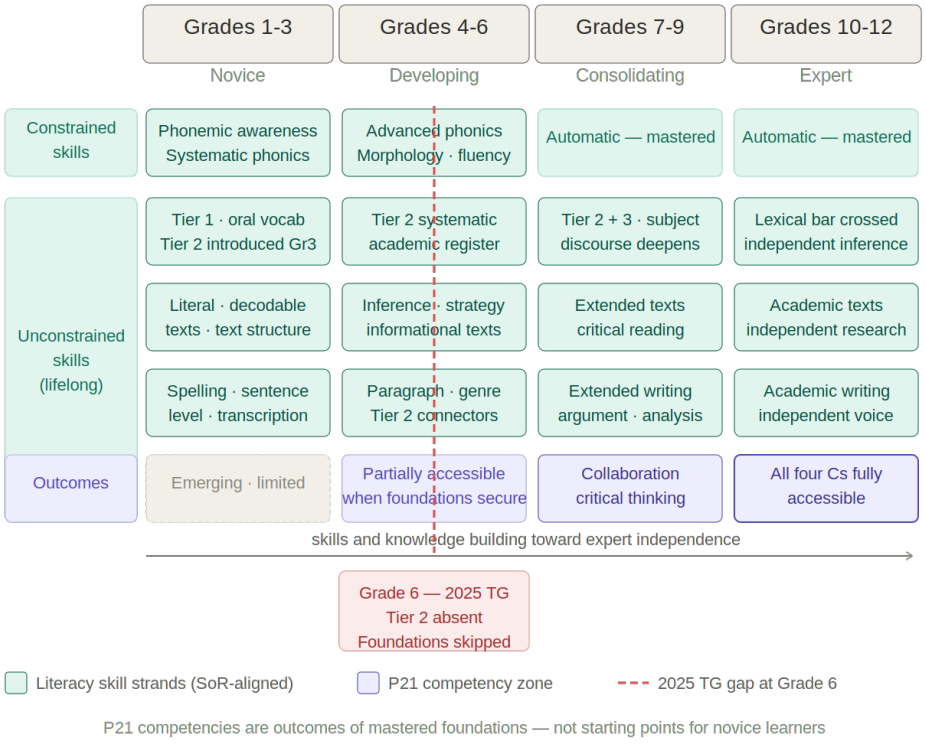

Figure 9 Literacy skill progression Grades 1–12: from foundations to P21 competencies

PIMD also urges the NIE to look beyond Grade 6 English. The progressive education philosophy embedded in this syllabus is not unique to it. If the same assumptions about discovery learning, incidental vocabulary acquisition, and self-directed assessment for novice learners are carried into other subject syllabi being developed under the current curriculum reforms, the same structural weaknesses will follow. The SoL evaluation framework in this report is subject-neutral and grade-neutral. It costs nothing to apply it before a syllabus is finalised rather than after.

The window is open. The evidence is clear. The tools, including AI, are available and accessible. Sri Lanka has invested significantly in this curriculum reform and in the teachers who will implement it. That investment deserves an instructional design that the science and instructional evidence-base supports.

PIMD stands ready to assist NIE in implementing the retrofit strategy described in this report, including teacher training through its existing partnerships with the Universities of Jaffna, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, and the University of Colombo.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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9 APPENDIX A: LESSON EVALUATION FRAMEWORK BASED ON SOR AND SOL

9.1 PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

This framework provides a structured, evidence-based method for evaluating English language lesson plans against the two major research traditions that guide effective literacy instruction:

- Science of Reading (SoR): The converging body of research from cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and linguistics that explains how the brain learns to read. Key pillars include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and language comprehension.
- Science of Learning (SoL): Research on how memory, attention, and cognition work during learning. Key principles include cognitive load theory, differentiation through explicit, scaffolded instruction for novice learners, and spaced retrieval practice.

Evaluators should review the full lesson plan (including materials, assessments, and teacher notes) before scoring. Each criterion is rated 1–4. Scores are totalled per domain and expressed as a percentage for easy comparison.

This tool evaluates quality of implementation. Appendix B uses a different tool to rate and compare all lessons in the three published Modules, using a binary rating (Present / Partial / Absent) which reflects *presence against a defined standard* or threshold. A lesson scores Absent when it does not meet the indicator's stated definition, even if related activity occurs.

9.2 RATING SCALE

Score	Level	Description
4	**Exemplary**	Exceeds expectations. Strong, consistent evidence of the criterion throughout the lesson. Could serve as a model.
3	**Proficient**	Meets expectations. Clear evidence of the criterion; minor gaps do not undermine effectiveness.
2	**Developing**	Partially meets expectations. Some evidence of the criterion but inconsistencies or gaps limit effectiveness.
1	**Emerging**	Does not yet meet expectations. Little or no evidence of the criterion; significant revision needed.

9.2.1 Domain 1: Science of Reading – Word Recognition Skills

This domain evaluates whether the lesson explicitly teaches and scaffolds foundational word recognition skills.

Criterion	Points	1 – Emerging	2 – Developing	3 – Proficient	4 – Exemplary
Phonological Awareness *Instruction in sound structure (phonemes, syllables, onset-rime)*	__ / 4	No phonological awareness instruction included.	Brief or incidental mention of sounds; not explicitly taught.	Phonological awareness explicitly taught with appropriate tasks for grade/phase.	Systematic, sequential PA instruction with formative checks and differentiation by readiness.
Phonics & Decoding *Explicit, systematic instruction in grapheme-phoneme correspondences*	__ / 4	Phonics absent or entirely implicit (e.g., cueing strategies).	Some phonics content present but not systematic or explicit.	Phonics follows a clear scope-and-sequence; decoding practice is intentional.	Phonics explicitly taught with blending/segmenting practice, connected text, and error correction protocol.
Fluency Development *Instruction and practice targeting accuracy, rate, and prosody*	__ / 4	No fluency instruction or practice.	Students read aloud but fluency is not the explicit goal; no modelling.	Teacher models fluent reading; students have structured oral reading practice.	Fluency routines are purposeful (e.g., repeated reading, partner reading); prosody and expression are addressed.
Orthographic Knowledge *Morphology, spelling patterns, word structure*	__ / 4	Word study is absent or random.	Some word-level work present but not connected to decoding/encoding.	Morphology or spelling patterns explicitly taught and connected to reading/writing.	Systematic morphology instruction integrated across reading and writing; generalization is expected and checked.
Word Recognition Automaticity *Practice toward sight-word automaticity and fluent word reading*	__ / 4	No practice for automaticity; students only decode laboriously.	Some word-reading practice but fluency not the goal.	Lesson includes purposeful practice to build automatic word recognition.	Multiple varied practice routines build automaticity; connected to fluent text reading.
Avoidance of Counterproductive Practices *Absence of three-cueing, guessing strategies, or meaning-first instruction*	__ / 4	Lesson explicitly teaches or rewards guessing from context or pictures.	No harmful practices but also no explicit phonics correction protocol.	Error correction focuses on phonics; context used only after decoding attempt.	Clear, consistent phonics-first error correction; teacher prompting language is precise and evidence-aligned.

9.2.2 Domain 2: Science of Reading – Comprehension & Language

Reading comprehension is not a skill but a product of language comprehension and word recognition skills. This domain examines whether the lesson builds the knowledge, vocabulary, and language structures students need to understand complex text.

Criterion	Points	1 – Emerging	2 – Developing	3 – Proficient	4 – Exemplary
Vocabulary Instruction *Explicit, rich instruction in Tier 2 & 3 words*	__ / 4	Vocabulary undefined or left to incidental learning.	Words listed or defined but not taught for deep understanding.	Tier 2/3 words explicitly taught with definitions, context, and student interaction.	Rich vocabulary routines (e.g., semantic mapping, examples/non-examples, review); words revisited across lesson.
Background & Domain Knowledge *Activation or building of relevant prior knowledge*	__ / 4	No activation of prior knowledge; students left to sink or swim.	Brief mention of prior knowledge but not explicitly built or connected.	Prior knowledge activated and relevant background explicitly built before/during reading.	Systematic knowledge-building sequence; teacher anticipates and addresses knowledge gaps proactively.
Comprehension Strategy Instruction *Evidence-based strategies (questioning, summarizing, inferencing)*	__ / 4	No comprehension strategies taught.	Strategies mentioned but not modelled or practiced deliberately.	At least one strategy explicitly taught with modelling and guided practice.	Metacognitive strategy instruction is purposeful, text-embedded, and faded toward independence.
Text Complexity & Selection *Appropriately complex, knowledge-building texts*	__ / 4	Text is below grade level or lacks intellectual substance.	Text is at grade level, but selection rationale is unclear.	Text is grade-appropriate in complexity; selected to build knowledge or support the learning objective.	Text complexity is scaffolded; multiple texts build knowledge across a unit sequence.
Oral Language & Discussion *Structured, accountable academic talk*	__ / 4	Little or no structured discussion; teacher-dominated Q&A.	Some discussion but not structured for academic language use.	Students engage in structured academic discussion with sentence frames or talk protocols.	Discussion routines develop academic language and push elaborated thinking; listening is also taught.

9.2.3 Domain 3: Science of Learning – Cognitive Architecture

This domain evaluates how well the lesson aligns with what research tells us about working memory, long-term memory, and schema formation.

Criterion	Points	1 – Emerging	2 – Developing	3 – Proficient	4 – Exemplary
Cognitive Load Management *Instruction avoids overloading working memory*	__ / 4	Lesson overloads students with multiple new concepts simultaneously; no chunking.	Some chunking evident but pacing or complexity still risks overload.	New content introduced in manageable chunks; extraneous load minimized.	Expert-novice distinctions guide pacing; fading of support as competence grows is explicit.
Explicit Instruction Sequence *I Do / We Do / You Do (Gradual Release) or equivalent*	__ / 4	No modelling; students left to discover or practice without guidance.	Partial modelling present but guided practice is thin before independent work.	Clear I-Do/We-Do/You-Do sequence; teacher models before releasing responsibility.	Gradual release is purposeful; check-for-understanding gates each phase before moving forward.
Worked Examples & Modelling *Teacher think-alouds and annotated examples*	__ / 4	No worked examples; teacher explains without showing the thinking process.	Examples shown but metacognitive process not made explicit.	Teacher think-aloud exposes the thinking process for at least one example.	Multiple worked examples with fading; students create or analyse partial examples as a bridge.
Dual Coding *Verbal and visual representations used together meaningfully*	__ / 4	No visual or multimodal elements; all information presented verbally.	Visuals present but decorative rather than explanatory.	Verbal and visual representations aligned to reinforce the same concept.	Students generate their own visual representations (e.g., graphic organisers, annotations) to consolidate learning.
Prior Knowledge Connection *New learning linked explicitly to existing schema*	__ / 4	New content presented without any connection to what students already know.	Some connection to prior knowledge but surface-level.	Teacher explicitly connects new learning to prior knowledge; analogies or bridging tasks used.	Lesson systematically builds on assessed prior knowledge; misconceptions are anticipated and addressed.

9.2.4 Domain 4: Science of Learning – Retrieval & Practice

This domain examines whether the lesson leverages the learning strategies of retrieval practice, spaced practice, interleaving, and elaborative interrogation.

Criterion	Points	1 – Emerging	2 – Developing	3 – Proficient	4 – Exemplary
Retrieval Practice *Low-stakes recall activities that strengthen memory*	__ / 4	No opportunities for students to retrieve information from memory.	Review present but relies on re-reading or recognition (e.g., matching) rather than recall.	At least one structured retrieval activity (e.g., brain dump, flash card, quiz).	Multiple retrieval formats used; students receive feedback and correct errors immediately.
Spaced Review *Content from previous lessons revisited within this lesson*	__ / 4	No review of prior content; lesson treats each class as isolated.	Brief review present but cursory; not connected to current learning.	Structured review of prior content at lesson start and/or end.	Spaced review is embedded purposefully (e.g., cumulative practice, interleaved review).
Interleaving *Mixing of problem types or skills rather than pure blocking*	__ / 4	All practice is blocked; no mixing of skills.	Slight variety in practice tasks but still predominantly blocked.	Practice mixes at least two skill types or concept categories.	Interleaving is deliberate and justified; students must identify the appropriate strategy as well as apply it.
Elaborative Interrogation & Self-Explanation *Students asked to explain why/how, not just what*	__ / 4	Questions are purely factual or recall-only.	Some why/how questions present but not consistently used.	Students regularly prompted to explain their reasoning or connect ideas.	Students generate explanations, evaluate examples, or teach concepts; teacher uses Socratic prompting.

9.2.5 Domain 5: Assessment & Differentiation

Effective lesson design includes ongoing checks for understanding, use of assessment data to adjust instruction, and meaningful differentiation grounded in student need.

Criterion	Points	1 – Emerging	2 – Developing	3 – Proficient	4 – Exemplary
Formative Assessment *Ongoing checks for understanding during instruction*	__ / 4	No formative checks; teacher continues regardless of student understanding.	Informal checks (e.g., thumbs up) used but not systematically.	Multiple structured formative checks at key points; teacher uses data to pace lesson.	Formative data explicitly drives in-lesson adjustments; student self-assessment is included.
Objective Alignment *Clear learning objective drives all*	__ / 4	No clear objective; activities do not cohere around a goal.	Objective stated but not consistently referenced; some	Objective is clear, measurable, and referenced during teaching; activities align.	Objective drives every instructional decision; students can articulate

Criterion	Points	1 – Emerging	2 – Developing	3 – Proficient	4 – Exemplary
lesson activities and assessment			activities are off target.		what they are learning and why.
Scaffolding & Differentiation *Support adapted to student readiness, language, and learning needs*	__ / 4	One-size-fits-all approach; no differentiation evident.	Some mention of support but no concrete plan for diverse learners.	Scaffolds identified for specific learner groups (e.g., ELLs, students with IEPs).	Differentiation is targeted, evidence-based, and reduces over time to build independence.
Error Analysis & Feedback *Teacher responds to errors in ways that deepen learning*	__ / 4	Errors ignored, simply corrected, or penalised without explanation.	Errors corrected but without explanation or connection to learning goal.	Teacher provides corrective feedback that explains the rule or concept.	Errors are treated as learning data; students self-correct using taught strategies; feedback is timely and specific.

9.2.6 Domain 6: Lesson Design & Coherence

Beyond individual strategies, this domain evaluates the overall coherence, structure, and professional quality of the lesson plan, including its internal logic, pacing, and connection to broader curriculum goals.

Criterion	Points	1 – Emerging	2 – Developing	3 – Proficient	4 – Exemplary
Lesson Structure & Pacing *Logical flow from opening to closure; realistic time allocations*	__ / 4	No clear structure; pacing is unrealistic or not considered.	Basic structure present but transitions or timing are unclear.	Lesson flows logically; timing is realistic and annotated.	Pacing accounts for formative checks, transitions, and flexible time; closure consolidates learning.
Curriculum Coherence *Lesson connects to unit goals, standards, and prior/future lessons*	__ / 4	Lesson is a standalone activity disconnected from curriculum.	Standard cited but connection to unit sequence unclear.	Lesson clearly fits within a unit; prior and future learning referenced.	Lesson explicitly builds knowledge across the unit; vertical alignment to prior/future grades evident.
Student Engagement & Motivation *Lesson is cognitively engaging, relevant, and purposeful for students*	__ / 4	Activities are passive or rote; no connection to student interest or purpose.	Some engaging elements but motivation is extrinsic or thin.	Lesson is purposefully engaging; students understand the relevance of tasks.	Lesson creates genuine intellectual engagement; student agency and curiosity are deliberately cultivated.
Materials & Resource Quality *Materials are appropriate, accessible, and aligned to evidence-based practice*	__ / 4	Materials are misaligned, inaccessible, or unsupported by research.	Materials are acceptable but not optimally aligned to SoR/SoL principles.	Materials are well-chosen and aligned to the lesson objective and evidence base.	Materials are exemplary; decodable texts, high-quality trade books, used appropriately.

9.2.7 Scoring Summary

Domain	Max Points	Score	% Score
1. Science of Reading – Foundational Skills	24		
2. Science of Reading – Comprehension & Language	20		
3. Science of Learning – Cognitive Architecture	20		
4. Science of Learning – Retrieval & Practice	16		
5. Assessment & Differentiation	16		
6. Lesson Design & Coherence	16		
TOTAL	**112**		

Overall Score	Rating	Recommendation
85–100%	**Distinguished**	Lesson exemplifies SoR/SoL principles. Share as a model; identify for coaching resource bank.
70–84%	**Proficient**	Lesson meets evidence-based standards. Minor refinements in 1–2 domains recommended.
55–69%	**Developing**	Lesson has a sound foundation but requires targeted revision. Coaching conversation recommended.
Below 55%	**Emerging**	Lesson requires significant redesign. Collaborative planning session and professional learning recommended.

10 Appendix B: Science of Reading and Science of Learning Inventory Evaluation

10.1 Introduction

This appendix reports the results of a binary inventory applied to all 30 lessons across Modules 1, 2, and 3, evaluating each lesson against six SoR indicators and eight SoL indicators. Its purpose is twofold: to quantify the structural absences identified in Chapter 3, and to confirm that the three lessons selected for in-depth evaluation in Chapter 4 are representative of the curriculum as a whole rather than outliers.

Each indicator was rated Present, Partial, or Absent against a defined threshold.[24] A summary of the results is contained in this appendix. Detailed lesson-by-lesson ratings are available on request from info@microdevpartners.org .

Table 3 Inventory Ratings

✓ **Present**	Strong, consistent evidence of this indicator in the lesson.
~ **Partial**	Some evidence present but incomplete, incidental, or inconsistent.
✗ **Absent**	Indicator expected for this lesson type but not found.
– **N/A**	Indicator not applicable to this lesson type.

Where an indicator does not apply to a lesson's stated purpose, it has been rated N/A. Assessment lessons (L10 in each module) are N/A for all instructional indicators. SoR indicators 4 (Reading Strategy Instruction) and 5 (Text Comprehension Support) are N/A for writing-only lessons. Module 1 is an oral communication module by design; its zero scores on phonics and decoding indicators reflect the module's focus rather than a failure to deliver reading instruction and should be read in that light. The more significant finding is that Module 2, explicitly titled "Reading for Life," also scores zero on both indicators across all nine of its lessons.

The three case study lessons — M1·L8, M2·L7, and M3·L3 — score within the typical range on every indicator across both inventories, confirming they are representative of the curriculum as a whole.

[24] The inventory ratings (Present / Partial / Absent) are distinct from the rubric ratings (Emerging / Developing / Proficient / Exemplary) used in Appendix A and applied to the three lesson evaluations in Chapter 4. The inventory below measures whether a lesson meets a defined threshold for each indicator. A lesson that scores Absent here may nonetheless score Developing in the Appendix A rubric if some related activity is present but falls short of the indicator's standard. Readers comparing ratings across the two frameworks should expect divergence of this kind. It indicates where partial or informal implementation exists but does not reach the defined standard.

10.2 SoR Inventory

10.2.1 Indicators

Indicator	Definition — Present / Partial / Absent
1. Phonics / Decoding	Present: explicit, systematic instruction in grapheme-phoneme relationships, blending/segmenting, or decoding multi-syllabic words. Partial: word-level activity with some attention to sound-spelling or morphological patterns (e.g., picture-word card reading, verb suffix spelling rules). Absent: no word-level reading support; vocabulary encountered only in context.
2. Fluency Modelling	Present: teacher models fluent oral reading with expression AND students practise with explicit guidance (echo reading, partner reading, timed re-reading). Partial: teacher reads aloud as a model, but no guided student fluency practice follows. Absent: no oral reading of connected text by teacher. N/A: assessment lesson.
3. Vocabulary Pre-teaching	Present: key Tier 2/3 vocabulary explicitly taught BEFORE students encounter it in text — definition given, example provided, concept-checking question asked. Partial: vocabulary labelled or listed alongside text (Word bank, Know it box) but encountered in text first. Absent: vocabulary encountered only in context with no systematic support. N/A: assessment lesson.
4. Reading Strategy Instruction	Present: a named comprehension strategy (e.g., main idea identification, inference, summarising, visualising, text structure) explicitly modelled through teacher think-aloud before students apply it. Partial: a strategy is named or briefly practised but without teacher modelling of the cognitive process. Absent: comprehension is tested (questions asked) but the process of how to comprehend is not taught. N/A: writing-only lesson or assessment lesson.
5. Text Comprehension Support	Present: background knowledge deliberately built or activated before reading AND comprehension scaffolded during reading (structured annotation, guided inference questions, graphic organiser). Partial: pre-reading knowledge activation present OR during-reading support present, but not both. Absent: text assigned and questions asked with no pre-reading or during-reading support. N/A: writing-only lesson or assessment lesson.
6. Writing–Reading Connection	Present: writing is explicitly used to deepen reading comprehension (summarise, analyse, or respond to a text in writing), OR a reading model text is explicitly taught as a craft model with teacher drawing attention to HOW the writer constructed it. Partial: a model text is provided for students to imitate in writing, but the connection is implicit — students follow the model without being taught why or how it works as a piece of writing. Absent: reading and writing occur separately with no connection made, or only one skill is present in the lesson. N/A: assessment lesson.

10.2.2 Key SoR findings:

- Phonics/Decoding (0/27, 0%) and Vocabulary Pre-teaching (0/27, 0%) are entirely absent across all 27 teaching lessons. NOTE: Module 1 is predominantly oral by design so it's fair to say it was never intended to address SoR foundational skills.
- Reading Strategy Instruction reaches only partial in 2/27 lessons (7%) — both the Lesson 9 poetry lessons.
- Text Comprehension Support is the strongest SoR indicator at partial in 10/27 lessons (37%), but this reflects pre-reading activation only — no lesson achieves the full standard of activation plus during-reading scaffolding.
- Writing–Reading Connection reaches partial in 14/27 lessons (52%), concentrated in Module 3 where model texts are routinely provided — but the connection is always implicit, never explicitly taught.
- The three evaluated lessons (M1·L8, M2·L7, M3·L3) score within the typical range on every indicator.

Table 4 SoR Inventory Summary — 27 teaching lessons

SoR indicator	M1 (9 lessons)	M2 (9 lessons)	M3 (9 lessons)	All 27 lessons
1. Phonics / decoding	0 full · 1 partial	0 full · 0 partial	0 full · 2 partial	**0 full (0%) · 3 partial (11%)**
2. Fluency modelling	0 full · 1 partial	0 full · 1 partial	0 full · 2 partial	**0 full (0%) · 4 partial (15%)**
3. Vocabulary pre-teaching	0 full · 1 partial	0 full · 0 partial	0 full · 0 partial	**0 full (0%) · 1 partial (4%)**
4. Reading strategy instruction	0 full · 0 partial	0 full · 1 partial	0 full · 1 partial	**0 full (0%) · 2 partial (7%)**
5. Text comprehension support	0 full · 1 partial	0 full · 9 partial	0 full · 0 partial	**0 full (0%) · 10 partial (37%)**
6. Writing–reading connection	0 full · 2 partial	0 full · 4 partial	0 full · 8 partial	**0 full (0%) · 14 partial (52%)**

10.3 SoL Inventory

10.3.1 Indicators

Indicator	Definition — Present / Partial / Absent
1. Cognitive Load Management	Present: new content introduced in clearly defined chunks, one or two novel elements at a time, extraneous load minimised. Partial: some chunking present but lesson introduces multiple novel elements simultaneously, or task demands on working memory are high for part of the lesson. Absent: multiple new concepts, vocabulary, grammar rules, and production tasks introduced in a single lesson with no chunking or processing pauses.
2. Worked Examples & Modelling	Present: teacher provides a fully worked example AND makes the cognitive process explicit through think-aloud annotation or structural analysis — students see HOW the output is constructed. Partial: a model is provided for students to follow but no think-aloud or unpacking of how/why it works. Absent: no model provided, or model present but unused/unreferenced.
3. Gradual Release (I Do / We Do / You Do)	Present: all three phases clearly present — teacher models (I Do), teacher and students work together (We Do), students work independently (You Do). Partial: two phases present (model + independent, skipping joint practice) or the We Do stage is very brief. Absent: students proceed directly to independent production without teacher modelling. N/A: assessment lesson.
4. Retrieval Practice	Present: a structured activity requiring students to recall specific content from memory — not re-reading, copying, or recognition tasks. Partial: some recall present but limited in scope or not from prior lessons. Absent: no recall from memory; all practice involves access to the original text or notes.
5. Spaced Review	Present: content from a prior lesson (at least one lesson earlier) is deliberately revisited and practised within this lesson — the connection is explicit and structured. Partial: some connection to prior learning is made but not structured as deliberate spaced practice. Absent: lesson treats itself as isolated with no connection to prior lessons.
6. Interleaving	Present: the lesson deliberately mixes at least two different task types or skill categories so students must identify which strategy to apply. Partial: some variation in task types but tasks remain largely sequential within one skill category. Absent: all tasks are the same type — purely blocked practice.
7. Elaborative Interrogation	Present: students are routinely asked to explain why or how (not just what), to evaluate, justify, or construct explanations — elaborative questioning is built into task design, not occasional. Partial: some why/how questions or Thinking Space boxes present but most questions remain factual or recall-level. Absent: all questions are factual, recall-level, or structural (fill in blank, underline the answer).
8. Formative Assessment	Present: a designated assessment task with stated criteria and a specified feedback protocol. Partial: informal check present but no criteria or feedback protocol specified. Absent: no formative check; teacher reacts to errors at the end with general feedback.

10.3.2 Key SoL findings

- Gradual Release achieves full presence in only 1/27 lessons (M3·L7 — the best-structured writing lesson in the term).
- Retrieval Practice scores full presence in 2/27 lessons (7%). Interleaving scores 0/27 for full presence and 1/27 partial — the lowest-scoring indicator in the inventory.
- These three indicators — gradual release, retrieval practice, and interleaving — are the most robustly evidence-supported strategies in the learning science literature (Rosenshine, 2012; Dunlosky et al., 2013) and the weakest in this curriculum.
- Cognitive Load Management and Gradual Release score partial in 96% of lessons each, reflecting scaffold provision and partial sequencing, not principled working memory management or complete I Do–We Do–You Do delivery.
- M3·L9 (Fun with Poems) - is the only lesson in the term to achieve full presence for Spaced Review, deliberately revisiting simile and rhyming words from M2·L9 several weeks earlier. This is the curriculum's sole designed instance of cross-module spaced retrieval.
- Formative assessment is the single strongest indicator at 33%, though as discussed in Section 3.2.5 the assessment loop is not closed.
- Elaborative Interrogation reaches partial in 24/27 lessons (89%) because Thinking Space boxes appear throughout all modules, but none escalate to sustained why/how questioning chains.

Table 5 SoL Inventory Summary — 27 teaching lessons

SoL indicator	M1 (9 lessons)	M2 (9 lessons)	M3 (9 lessons)	All 27 lessons
1. Cognitive load management	0 full · 8 partial	0 full · 9 partial	0 full · 9 partial	**0 full (0%) · 26 partial (96%)**
2. Worked examples and modelling	1 full · 6 partial	0 full · 2 partial	0 full · 8 partial	**1 full (4%) · 16 partial (59%)**
3. Gradual release (I/We/You Do)	0 full · 9 partial	0 full · 9 partial	1 full · 8 partial	**1 full (4%) · 26 partial (96%)**
4. Retrieval practice	1 full · 3 partial	0 full · 0 partial	1 full · 4 partial	**2 full (7%) · 7 partial (26%)**
5. Spaced review	0 full · 4 partial	0 full · 1 partial	1 full · 5 partial	**1 full (4%) · 10 partial (37%)**
6. Interleaving	0 full · 0 partial	0 full · 0 partial	0 full · 1 partial	**0 full (0%) · 1 partial (4%)**
7. Elaborative interrogation	0 full · 6 partial	0 full · 9 partial	0 full · 9 partial	**0 full (0%) · 24 partial (89%)**
8. Formative assessment	3 full · 0 partial	3 full · 0 partial	3 full · 0 partial	**9 full (33%) · 0 partial (0%)**

11 APPENDIX C: REVISED GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MODULES

This appendix provides a revised version of the General Instructions for the Implementation of Modules (NIE 2025:49-50). It preserves the curriculum's emphasis on learner confidence, creativity, communication, collaboration, real-world contexts, and 21st century competencies, while strengthening the instructional approach in line with the Science of Reading and the Science of Learning.

11.1 PREPARING FOR THE LEARNING-TEACHING PROCESS

Know your students' starting point. Before beginning each module, take stock of what students already know and can do in relation to the module's focus. In Module 1 this means assessing oral confidence and vocabulary range. In Module 2 it means identifying students who struggle to read module texts independently. In Module 3 it means noting which students cannot yet write at sentence level without significant support. Instruction that begins from where students actually are -- not where the syllabus assumes they are -- is the most direct route to the goals the curriculum sets.

Share the learning destination clearly. At the start of each lesson, tell students explicitly what they will be able to do by the end of it, and why it matters. Use the learning outcome language from the module but make it concrete and meaningful. Students who understand what they are working toward monitor their own progress more effectively and engage with tasks more purposefully.

Maintain three student records throughout the term. Each student should maintain three records throughout the term: a vocabulary journal, a scrapbook, and a learning portfolio. Encourage students to design these creatively and to take pride in them. The vocabulary journal is a learning tool, used actively throughout the term: students record a small number of important words each lesson -- the word, its pronunciation by syllable, its meaning in their own words, its word class, a sentence using it, and one related word form. Entries are made after the teacher has explicitly introduced the word. The scrapbook is a creative collection of real-world English texts and student-produced work. The portfolio is a curated record of the student's best work across the term, used for reflection and as evidence of progress.

Use the vocabulary journal for retrieval, not only recording. Words entered once and never revisited will not be learned. At the start of each lesson, before new content is introduced, spend three to five minutes asking students to recall words from previous lessons without opening their journals -- writing the meaning from memory, using the word in a new sentence, or identifying a related word form. Students then check their journals to confirm. This retrieval practice is the most effective technique available for moving vocabulary from short-term encounter to long-term memory.

Manage learning time in and outside school. Each module contains ten hours of learning time: 500 minutes during school hours and 100 minutes allocated for guided self-learning outside school. During self-learning time, give students clear instructions and manageable tasks. Short vocabulary retrieval tasks, re-reading of the lesson's model text, and one or two practice sentences make effective self-learning activities that reinforce what was taught in class.

Build a print-rich, real-world learning environment. Encourage students to collect English text from their environment -- food labels, notices, newspaper children's pages, timetables, signs -- and bring it to class. Use these texts as supplementary reading in Module 2 and as writing models in Module 3. Display students' collected texts and written work on the classroom walls to create a print-rich learning

environment. The module topics connect naturally to real-world English, and students who see this connection read and write with greater motivation and purpose.

11.2 IMPLEMENTING THE LEARNING-TEACHING PROCESS

Create a warm, structured, and safe classroom atmosphere. Create a classroom atmosphere that is warm, respectful, and structured. Build positive rapport with students from the first lesson. Learn names quickly, show genuine interest in students' lives and communities, and respond to contributions with encouragement. Encourage all students to participate by making it safe to make mistakes -- emphasise that errors are a normal and productive part of learning. A supportive environment reduces anxiety and allows students to focus their full attention on learning. Structure and warmth are not in tension: routines and clear expectations help students feel secure, not constrained.

Build explicit instruction before every activity. The curriculum's activities -- discussions, group tasks, writing from models, peer editing -- are most productive when students arrive at them with the knowledge and skills to participate successfully. Before any activity, teach the language it requires. Before a group discussion about an inspiring person, teach the vocabulary students will need to express reasons and give examples (admire, achieve, because, despite, which shows that). Before a grammar activity, state and demonstrate the rule clearly, then practise it together, before asking students to apply it independently. The sequence is always: teacher models first, class practises together second, students work independently third. This is the I Do--We Do--You Do sequence. It is not a choice between teacher-led and student-centred learning; it is both, in the right order.

Teach grammar explicitly, then consolidate through practice. State grammar rules directly, clearly, and early. Write the rule on the board. Demonstrate it with three or four examples, thinking aloud as you do so students can hear how a skilled language user applies it. Then ask students to practise it in a controlled activity with your guidance before releasing them to use it independently. Guided re-discovery -- asking students to find further examples once they have understood the rule -- is a valuable consolidation activity that combines structured learning with student engagement.

Pre-teach vocabulary before every reading or writing task. Choose four to six important words before each reading or writing lesson. Introduce each one explicitly: say it, write it on the board, give a clear meaning in student-friendly language, use it in a sentence, ask a concept-checking question. Use the words yourself in your instructions and discussion throughout the lesson so students hear them multiple times in meaningful context. Then ask students to read or write. Words that students meet for the first time during a task -- while simultaneously managing the task itself -- are rarely retained.

Open every lesson with a module-thread retrieval loop. The three modules run in parallel across the term, with each module lesson separated from the previous one in the same thread by two or three days. Convert this gap into a learning opportunity by opening every lesson with three to five minutes of structured recall from the previous lesson in the same module thread -- not from yesterday's lesson in a different module. Ask students to write three vocabulary words from memory, reconstruct a sentence structure, or recall the key content of the previous lesson's text. This brief retrieval opener converts accidental spacing into deliberate consolidation.

Model fluent reading aloud before students read independently. In Module 2 reading lessons, read the text aloud to the class first, with fluent expression, before asking students to read it themselves. As you read, make your thinking visible for one or two things a skilled reader does: 'I am going to re-read this sentence because I want to make sure I have understood the cause and the effect.' After the read-aloud, ask students to read the text independently before answering comprehension questions.

Modelling fluent reading first makes the comprehension task accessible to more students, particularly those who struggle with decoding.

Structure collaboration so every student is prepared to contribute. Create regular opportunities for students to work individually, in pairs, in small groups, and as a whole class. Collaborative tasks -- pair discussion, group work, peer editing -- are most equitable and effective when every student arrives with something to contribute. Before a pair discussion, give students two minutes to write their own answer first. Before peer editing, give students a specific checklist tied directly to the grammar or vocabulary the lesson has taught. Assign clear roles in group work, ensure every student has an opportunity to contribute, and monitor engagement actively. Collaboration should extend and strengthen individual thinking, not replace it.

Allow thinking time and encourage students to explain their reasoning. Allow sufficient time for students to think, rehearse, practise, and revise. After asking a question, wait in silence for several seconds before taking answers -- this thinking time produces richer responses and encourages more students to participate. Encourage students to explain their reasoning and justify answers rather than simply stating them. Deeper processing -- explaining why, connecting to prior knowledge, generating examples -- improves understanding and long-term retention.

Give corrective feedback promptly, specifically, and at lesson level. Give corrective feedback promptly and specifically. When a student makes an error in speech or writing, acknowledge it at the moment it occurs: 'you said he play, but with he, she, it we add -s, so it is he plays -- say it again.' Prompt the student to self-correct before supplying the answer. At the end of the lesson, summarise one or two common error patterns across the class and model the correction. After every assessment task, identify the most common gaps and use them to plan the opening of the next lesson in the same module thread. Focus feedback on one or two key language targets per lesson rather than attempting to address everything. Feedback that is specific, timely, and actionable improves learning; general end-of-lesson comments alone have limited effect.

Manage cognitive load through sequencing and scaffolding. Sequence each lesson so that new elements are introduced one at a time. Provide sentence frames, vocabulary support, and worked examples at the point where students are producing new language, and withdraw these gradually as students demonstrate competence. When students are writing, allow access to the vocabulary journal and any relevant word support. Reducing the demand on working memory at the point of a new task is not making the task easier -- it is making learning possible. The support is removed as competence grows.

Use the portfolio for structured reflection, not only collection. At the end of each module, guide students to review their portfolio work and identify two things: one piece they are proud of, and one thing they would do differently now that they know more. This reflection is most effective when it uses the vocabulary students have learned and when it connects to the learning outcomes shared at the start of the module. Help students understand how consistent practice, retrieval, and revision across the term support long-term learning and growing independence.

Build student self-awareness and responsibility for learning. Encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. Help them identify their own strengths and areas for improvement using the Progress Check and portfolio evidence. Students who understand their own progress -- who can say what they know, what they are still working on, and what they need to do next -- become more motivated and more effective learners over time. Self-assessment works best when students have clear criteria, when the teacher validates and extends it, and when it leads to a specific next step.

Develop citizenship and learning dispositions alongside language skills. Use collaborative activities and respectful discussion to build the dispositions the curriculum values alongside language skills. Encourage students to listen actively when others speak, to respect different ideas and perspectives, and to support one another's learning. Grade 6 students are building habits of mind -- curiosity, respect, cooperation, responsibility -- that will serve them throughout schooling and beyond. These dispositions are developed through consistent practice in a classroom where they are visibly expected and modelled by the teacher.

12 APPENDIX D: TERM 1 LITERACY RETROFIT -TEACHER IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

This appendix sets out the five components of the retrofit for the literacy skills parallel program recommended in Chapter 5, together with indicative time allocations and implementation notes. This program is illustrative, not definitive. AI can easily be used to provide quick scripted lessons for teachers. As an example, PIMD's AI-powered Phonics Lesson Planning app[25] has been developed to provide consistently scripted phonics lessons for a foundation phonics program for Grade 3. The program scribed below is a catch-up program and so would follow a different sequence to the foundation program. The app however demonstrates how AI can be used for quick and easy lesson planning.

12.1 WORD RECOGNITION

The program is designed to run as a short daily and weekly routine alongside the existing Grade 6 modules, requiring no timetable restructuring and no rewriting of curriculum content. The five components are cumulative in their support for word recognition and reading fluency.

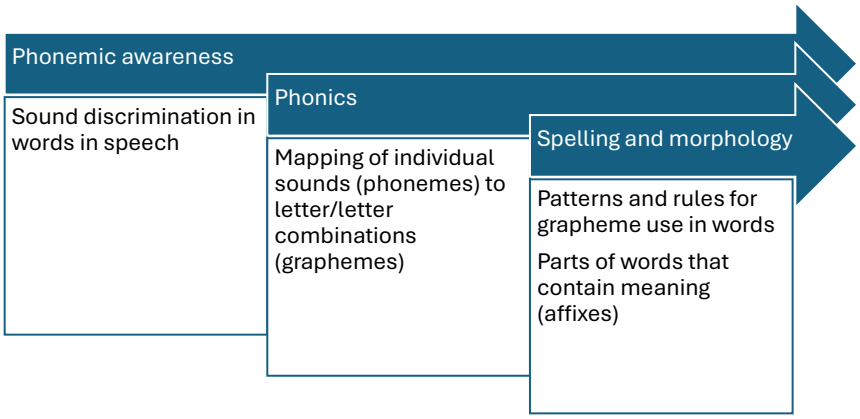

Figure 10 Learning to read from speech to print

They should be implemented as a coherent sequence rather than as isolated add-ons, and teachers should receive structured training in each component before implementation. An entry screening assessment for all students beginning Grade 6 is strongly recommended so that instructional intensity can be calibrated to student need from the outset.[26]

Suggested tracking measures across the program are:

- decoding accuracy using simple word lists;
- oral reading fluency using short passages;
- spelling accuracy of taught patterns; and
- vocabulary growth measured through word families.

[25] See https://phonics.microdevpartners.org/

[26] BPST-III (Right to Read 2024) is a tool that can be used for older students from Grade 4 and up. For phonological awareness, the PAST Test (PAST 2024) is simple and comprehensive to administer.

These do not require formal standardised testing and can be administered by classroom teachers as brief, recurring checks integrated into lesson routines. AI can be used to generate appropriate word lists, reading passages, spelling tests, and vocabulary for word family development.

12.1.1 Component 1: Phonemic Awareness Repair

Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. It is the prerequisite for phonics instruction. It is a biologically primary oral skill but one that must reach a sufficient level of precision before the alphabetic code (the systematic mapping of sounds to letters) can be reliably taught. Many Grade 6 students in Sri Lanka who began reading English in Grade 3 will not have received explicit phonemic awareness instruction and may have insecure control of English phoneme segmentation and blending, particularly for consonant clusters (e.g. *str-*, *-nch*, *-ld*) which do not exist in Sinhala or Tamil.

Phonemic awareness repair at Grade 6 is not a return to primary school content. It should be delivered briskly, with age-appropriate vocabulary, and focused only on the specific gaps that are blocking progress rather than covering the full primary sequence. A daily routine of three to five minutes is sufficient.

1. The teacher models blending or segmenting four to six words, students practise chorally, and then two or three students are asked individually.
2. Phoneme manipulation tasks - deleting, substituting, or transposing phonemes in simple words - build the flexibility needed for spelling and decoding.

This component is non-negotiable as a starting point: phonics instruction and spelling will not consolidate reliably in students who cannot yet segment and blend English phonemes with confidence.

It is essential that teachers practice their own phoneme articulation first and ensure that they are pronouncing sounds correctly. A common mistake in the Sri Lankan context is to add a vowel sound to consonants that are unvoiced (e.g. ‘t’ pronounced ‘it’, or ‘f’ pronounced ‘fa’ – both it and fa are incorrect).

12.1.2 Component 2: Systematic Phonics

Phonics instruction at Grade 6 should be explicit, cumulative, and fast-paced. It is the systematic teaching of the alphabetic code that students were not taught in primary school. The content should be age-appropriate in vocabulary and examples, for instance multisyllabic words from the students' Grade 6 environment rather than the simple CVC words used in early primary instruction. But the sequence should be structured, moving from the most common and reliable grapheme-phoneme correspondences to the more complex and irregular.[27]

A daily routine of eight to ten minutes is recommended.

1. The teacher introduces or reviews one spelling pattern — for example, the long vowel spellings *a_e*, *ee* and *ea*, or the vowel-r patterns *ar* and *or* . Start with the sound and its articulation first and then show the print.
2. Students read a short word list containing real words and a small number of nonsense words (which test decoding rather than memory).
3. The lesson ends with immediate dictation of four to six words and one sentence using the taught pattern, with explicit error correction.
4. Cumulative review of previously taught patterns should be woven into each session.

[27] For a complete list of English phonemes and corresponding graphemes see for example Dyslexia Reading Well (nd).

This component addresses the most consequential gap identified in the SoR evaluation: Module 2 of the new syllabus assumes that reading improvement follows from comprehension tasks, but for many Grade 6 learners the actual bottleneck is at the level of decoding. Comprehension activities cannot compensate for insecure word recognition.

12.1.3 Component 3: Spelling as a Reading Intervention

Spelling is not a transcription skill separate from reading. It is reading in reverse. When we read, we move from print to sound (decoding); when we spell, we move from sound to print (encoding). Explicit spelling instruction therefore directly strengthens the orthographic mapping process - the mechanism by which the brain builds precise, stable representations of written words in long-term memory - and accelerates the automaticity in word recognition that fluency depends on. For this reason, spelling instruction should be understood and implemented as a core reading intervention, not merely as a writing support.

Two to three sessions per week of ten minutes each is sufficient. The focus should be on phoneme-grapheme mapping activities:

1. Students segment a spoken word into its individual sounds and record each sound in a cell of a sound-box grid, then identify the grapheme (letter or letter combination) that represents each phoneme.
2. This is followed by immediate dictation with explicit and corrective feedback. Errors should be corrected at the point of writing, with the teacher explaining the rule or pattern, not simply providing the correct spelling.
3. Students who routinely confuse a specific pattern (for example, consistently writing *ee* where *ea* is required) should have that pattern flagged for additional targeted review.

Also take the opportunity to teach spelling patterns (e.g. CVC, CCVC, etc) as this helps students understand and learn spelling rules as well as improving automaticity in word reading.

Without this component, the writing tasks required in Module 3 of the new syllabus will place a heavy spelling load on students' working memory, leaving insufficient capacity for the compositional thinking that writing also demands.

12.1.4 Component 4: Morphology

Morphology is the study of meaningful units within words, including prefixes, suffixes, and base forms. It is the most powerful lever available for accelerating vocabulary growth in adolescent learners. A student who knows the suffix *-tion* converts nouns into a recognisable family across hundreds of words (*decision, production, explanation, organisation*). A student who knows the prefix *re-* immediately has access to the meaning of dozens of verbs they have not previously encountered (*reconsider, reorganise, reintroduce*). Explicit morphology instruction from Grade 6 is therefore not a luxury addition to the literacy program: it is the most direct available route to the Tier 2 vocabulary growth that the lexical bar argument establishes as non-negotiable.

A weekly routine of ten to fifteen minutes is recommended.

1. The teacher introduces one prefix or suffix, explains its meaning and the grammatical change it produces, and builds a small word family explicitly — for example, *play → player → playful → replay*, or *act → action → active → inactive*.
2. Crucially, instruction should link meaning and spelling simultaneously rather than treating them as separate concerns. Students should be able to both define and correctly write the word forms they are being taught.

3. The vocabulary journal maintained across all three modules is the natural home for morphology entries, and entries should be structured to include the base form, derived forms, word class, and a sentence.

This component lays the groundwork for the morphological analysis that will allow students to infer the meaning of unfamiliar Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary in secondary school texts. This is the precise capability that the lexical bar concept identifies as the threshold skill for independent academic reading.

12.1.5 Component 5: Reading Fluency

Reading fluency is the ability to read connected text accurately, at an appropriate rate, and with prosodic expression. It is the bridge between word recognition and comprehension. A reader who must consciously decode each word individually cannot simultaneously attend to meaning. Their working memory is fully occupied by the process of identifying words. As word recognition becomes automatic, cognitive resources are freed for comprehension. Fluency is therefore not a proxy for reading accuracy. It is a functional prerequisite for comprehension at the level required for secondary academic reading.

In the new Grade 6 syllabus, fluency is neither explicitly taught nor assessed. It is assumed to develop as a by-product of reading activity. This assumption is not supported by the SoR evidence base, particularly for late-start learners whose word recognition remains effortful.

Two fluency sessions per week of five minutes each, structured around repeated oral reading of a short, previously decoded passage, is the minimum effective dose.

1. The teacher or a more proficient peer models fluent reading of the passage first.
2. Then the student reads independently while the teacher tracks words correct per minute (WCPM) and notes specific error patterns such as substitutions, omissions, hesitations, that indicate which words or patterns require further decoding attention.
3. The same passage is reread across two or three sessions before a new passage is introduced. It is the repetition of reading a known text, not the introduction of new text, that builds the automaticity that transfers to unfamiliar material.

Without measurable fluency growth across Grade 6, students will not have the processing capacity to engage meaningfully with the longer, more complex texts that Grades 7 to 12 will require.

12.1.6 Module 1 “Step Up” retrofit (oral language → print mapping)

These skills can and should be further reinforced through the syllabus itself.

Module 1 is rich in listening/speaking tasks (introductions, greetings, simple dialogues). The retrofit aim is to turn every oral task into a speech-to-print bridge. This can be done as follows:

- Read the dialogue as text, not only as speech. When students practise greetings (Lesson 2 “Greet Me”), display/hand out the dialogue and do teacher read → choral read → paired read.
- Add word-level decoding focus on 5–8 words from that dialogue (e.g., *morning, name, meet, from*).
- Syllable mapping for longer “topic words”: In Lesson 1 “Lifting Me Up”, students are exposed to words like *scientist, musician* (in the listening-and-circle task). Add:
  - clapping the syllables (sci-en-tist; mu-si-cian)
  - underline the stressed syllable
  - decode and then spell one syllable via sound boxes

- A “high-utility word wall” with decoding: Module 1 naturally produces high-frequency words: *I’m, my, name, you, from, like, can, want*. Add:
  - 5 words/week
  - teach pronunciation + spelling pattern + quick dictation
  - cumulative review daily (30–60 seconds)

12.1.7 Module 2 “Reading for Life” retrofit (make reading instruction real)

Module 2 claims a focus on reading skills and provides varied reading tasks. The retrofit aim is to ensure every reading lesson contains explicit instruction in decoding + vocabulary + fluency. This can be done as follows:

- Pre-teach decoding targets (not just meaning)
  Before reading, choose 6–10 words and split them into:
  - Pattern words (teach phonics/morphology): e.g., vowel teams, endings, prefix/suffix
  - Irregular words (teach as “heart words” with mapped tricky part)
  - This replaces the common failure mode: pre-teaching only definitions.
- During reading:
  - first pass: accuracy (decode, don’t guess)
  - second pass: meaning (questions/discussion)
- Fluency protocol - after reading:
  - 60–90 sec reread in pairs
  - 1 minute “phrase-cued reading” (teacher marks natural phrasing)
  - quick comprehension check

12.1.8 Module 3 “Mirror Wall” retrofit (writing with transcription support)

Module 3 aims to improve writing and grammar/vocabulary through paragraphs and short essays. The retrofit aim is to protect writing time by reducing spelling/grammar cognitive load through explicit routines. This can be done as follows:

- Sentence combining + sentence frames. Before paragraph writing:
  - teach 2–3 sentence patterns explicitly (e.g., because/so; when/after; relative clause with *who/that*)
  - then students expand into paragraph
- Dictation tied to the writing topic. Students write more successfully when they can spell topic words.
  - create a 10-word “topic spelling set”
  - dictation Monday/Wednesday
  - writing Friday uses those words
- Morphology for academic writing. Teach the link between:
  - verb → noun (*decide* → *decision*)
  - adjective → noun (*happy* → *happiness*)

12.2 Language Comprehension and Lexical Progression

The SoR evidence base is unambiguous that vocabulary knowledge of the depth required for academic reading, specifically knowing a word's pronunciation, spelling, meaning across contexts, grammatical behaviour, and morphological family, cannot be built through definition-copying or decontextualised use-in-a-sentence exercises. Words need to be encountered in text, discussed orally, retrieved from memory, and used productively in writing across multiple lessons before they are genuinely known.

This creates a specific design problem for the Grade 6 retrofit. The module texts are lexically light by design including only short, familiar topics, everyday vocabulary, simple sentence structures. The vocabulary categories specified for each module generate Tier 1 words almost exclusively. You cannot simply add a Tier 2 list to the Teacher's Guide and expect incidental learning to do the rest, because the conditions for incidental acquisition of Tier 2 vocabulary - frequent encounters across varied contexts, in texts of sufficient density and complexity - are precisely what the modules do not provide. The retrofit must therefore create those conditions deliberately, using three layered strategies that together solve the contextualisation problem without requiring new textbooks, timetable changes, or significant additional preparation time.

12.2.1 Strategy 1: The teacher as the primary Tier 2 context

The most immediately available source of Tier 2 vocabulary in the Grade 6 classroom is not the module text. It is the teacher. Research on instructional language consistently shows that the academic vocabulary teachers use in explanations, questions, feedback, and task instructions is one of the most powerful and underused vehicles for vocabulary development, particularly for ESL learners who have limited access to academic English outside school (Dutro & Moran, 2003; Zwiers, 2008). A teacher who asks, *"Can you describe what you see in the picture?"* rather than *"What is in the picture?"* has used the word *describe* meaningfully in context. A teacher who says, *"Compare your answer with your partner's. What is similar and what is different?"* has used *compare, similar,* and *different* in a single instruction. A teacher who responds to a student's answer with *"That's a good reason. You're explaining why, not just what"* has modelled the word *reason* and the distinction between description and explanation simultaneously.

This is not incidental. It must be deliberate:

1. The Teacher's Guide addendum should specify, for each week's six to eight target words, a set of five to ten teacher language prompts such as questions, instructions, and feedback phrases, that use those words naturally in the flow of the lesson. AI can be used to generate the lists.
2. Teachers rehearse these prompts before the lesson so that the Tier 2 words appear repeatedly in spoken context across all three module lessons of the week.
3. Students hear each word multiple times before they are asked to use it themselves, which is consistent with the input-before-output sequence that vocabulary acquisition research supports (Nation, 2001).
4. The target words are written on the board or displayed on a word wall throughout the week so students can see the written form as they hear it.

This strategy costs nothing and requires no additional lesson time. It requires teacher training and preparation time, which is why the Teacher's Guide prompts must be explicit and ready to use rather than leaving teachers to devise their own Tier 2 language.

12.2.2 Strategy 2: Supplementary bridge texts

Teacher oral language provides the initial spoken context for Tier 2 vocabulary. Written context , which is what academic reading requires, must also be provided, and the module texts cannot reliably supply it. The solution is a set of short supplementary bridge texts: one per week, purpose-written, of approximately one hundred to one hundred and fifty words, which use the week's target Tier 2 words in a meaningful written context anchored to the module topic. AI can be used to generate these texts.

Bridge texts are not an additional reading lesson. They are a two-to-three-minute shared reading activity in which the teacher reads aloud while students follow. This that serves as the written introduction to the week's target words. Crucially, they use the same topic as the current module

lesson, so students bring background knowledge to the reading, and the Tier 2 words are comprehensible in context.

- A Module 1 lesson on personal interests and abilities becomes a bridge text about a young person describing what they want to achieve and why, using *describe, explain, prefer, reason, goal, develop* in natural written sentences.
- A Module 2 lesson on inspiring personalities becomes a bridge text that explains what made a particular person significant and what we can learn from their example, using *identify, suggest, evidence, significant, influence, achieve*.
- A Module 3 lesson on pets becomes a bridge text explaining what research tells us about why animals are important to people, using *feature, characteristic, communicate, respond, purpose, require*.

The bridge texts serve three functions simultaneously:

1. They provide written context for the target words before students are asked to use them.
2. They model the register of academic writing (slightly denser, more formal, more structured than the module texts) giving students their first regular exposure to what academic prose actually looks and sounds like.
3. They provide a shared reference point for the vocabulary journal entries that follow. Students record the target words in their journals using examples drawn from the bridge text rather than from their own invented sentences, which means the examples are linguistically richer and more transferable.

Bridge texts for Term 1 (ten texts of one hundred to one hundred and fifty words each) represent a small and one-time writing investment that can be produced centrally using AI and distributed to all schools as part of the Teacher's Guide addendum (print) or electronically where schools have the facilities. They require no student workbook changes and no lesson restructuring. Sample bridge texts for Weeks 1 and 4 are provided at the end of this appendix as illustrations.

12.2.3 Strategy 3: The vocabulary journal as an active production tool

The vocabulary journal is already specified in the new Grade 6 syllabus as a student resource, and the revised General Instructions in Appendix C of this report strengthen its structure. In the context of Strand 2, the journal serves an additional function. It is the site of the structured production tasks that move students from receptive familiarity with Tier 2 words toward productive control.

Each week's journal entry for the six to eight target words should follow a consistent five-part format:

1. First, the word and its pronunciation, with syllable marking (*de-scribe, ex-plain, com-pare*).
2. Second, the word class and a student-friendly definition in the student's own words, written after the teacher's explanation rather than copied.
3. Third, the word in context, using a sentence drawn from the bridge text or from the teacher's oral modelling.
4. Fourth, the word family, showing two or three related forms (*describe → description → descriptive; explain → explanation → explanatory*).
5. Fifth, a production sentence: one sentence written by the student that uses the word to explain or reason rather than simply to describe. The distinction matters: *I have a dog* uses a Tier 1 word descriptively; *I prefer dogs because they are loyal and easy to train* uses *prefer* and *because* to express a reasoned preference. The production sentence prompt should specify this requirement explicitly: *Write a sentence using [word] that gives a reason or explanation, not just a description*.

The journal becomes a retrieval tool through the module-thread retrieval opener. At the start of each module lesson, students close their journals and attempt to recall: the meaning of three words from the previous week, the word family of one word, and the production sentence frame for one connector (*however, therefore, although*). This bidirectional retrieval from word to meaning, and from meaning to word is what converts receptive familiarity into productive control over time.

12.2.4 Term 1 Tier 2 Word List

The sixty words shown below in Table 6 constitute the core Tier 2 teaching vocabulary for Grade 6 Term 1. All words are drawn from the Academic Word List[28] developed by Averil Coxhead (Coxhead 2000; Academic Word List n/d) and the New General Service List developed by Browne (Browne 2013; New General Service List Project 2025), verified as Tier 2, that is cross-domain academic utility, not everyday conversational and not domain-specific technical. They are sequenced by week and grouped thematically to support the module topics running concurrently, with more concrete and action-oriented words introduced early and more abstract relational words introduced once students have a vocabulary journal routine established.

The list targets deep instruction including pronunciation, meaning, spelling, word family, and production, for all sixty words across Term 1. An additional bank of thirty to forty words suitable for receptive introduction through bridge texts and teacher oral language is indicated separately. By the end of Term 1, students with full exposure to the program should have productive control of approximately forty to fifty words and receptive familiarity with a further thirty to forty, placing them on track for the three hundred-to-four-hundred-word family target by end of Grade 6.

Table 6 Term 1 Tier 2 Word List

Week	Module themes	Target words (deep instruction)	Key word families
1	Personal identity, introductions	*introduce, describe, explain, identify, example, purpose*	description/descriptive; explanation/explanatory
2	Abilities, preferences, choices	*compare, similar, different, prefer, choose, reason*	comparison/comparative; preference
3	Opinions, reading strategies	*suggest, opinion, agree, disagree, however, although*	suggestion; agreement
4	Cause and effect, famous people	*cause, effect, result, therefore, influence, lead to*	influential; result (n/v distinction)
5	Goals, development, improvement	*process, develop, improve, achieve, goal, require*	development; achievement; requirement
6	Information, evidence, importance	*information, source, accurate, important, significant, evidence*	significance; accuracy; informative

[28] Coxhead's Academic Word List (Coxhead 2000) specifically covers Tier 2 academic words whereas the new GSL excludes academic vocabulary. Coxhead used academic texts as her corpus for selecting words and a much larger corpus (size, range of topics) than previous lists (Coxhead 2000:214). Her list contains 570 word families where a word family is defined as "a stem plus all closely related affixed forms" which "includes all inflections and the most frequent, productive, and regular prefixes and suffixes" (Coxhead 2000:218). Her corpus covered Arts, Commerce, Law, Science and selected sub-disciplines (see Coxhead 2000:220).

Week	Module themes	Target words (deep instruction)	Key word families
7	Features, characteristics, texts	*feature, characteristic, represent, specific, general, detail*	representation; generalise
8	Organisation, writing structure	*organise, structure, section, include, contain, sequence*	organisation; sequential
9	Communication, response, meaning	*communicate, express, respond, meaning, context, appropriate*	communication; response; expression
10	Review, reflection, progress	*review, evaluate, reflect, progress, demonstrate, effective*	evaluation; reflection; effectiveness

12.2.5 Logical connectors for cumulative introduction across Term 1

Logical connectors are a distinct sub-category of Tier 2 vocabulary that require separate treatment because they function grammatically as well as lexically. This means they do not just mean something, they signal a structural relationship between clauses. They should be introduced progressively in the order shown in Table 7, with each connector taught explicitly, practised in a sentence-combining activity, and required in at least one writing task before the next connector is introduced. They are not part of the weekly six-to-eight-word allocation; they are introduced one per week as a sentence-level grammar-vocabulary integration activity of five minutes.

Table 7 Term 1 Connective words for syntax awareness development

When introduced	Connector	Relationship signalled	Example frame
Week 1	*because*	Cause/reason	… because …
Week 2	*so / therefore*	Result/consequence	…, so … / …. Therefore, …
Week 3	*however*	Contrast/qualification	…. However, …
Week 4	*although*	Concession	Although …, …
Week 5	*for example*	Exemplification	…. For example, …
Week 6	*as a result*	Consequence (formal)	…. As a result, …
Week 7	*in contrast*	Direct contrast	…. In contrast, …
Week 8	*in order to*	Purpose	… in order to …
Week 9	*despite*	Concession (formal)	Despite …, …
Week 10	*on the other hand*	Alternative perspective	…. On the other hand, …

12.2.6 Sample Bridge Text: Week 1

Module theme: Personal identity and introductions.

Target words: introduce, describe, explain, identify, example, purpose

When we meet someone new, we usually introduce ourselves by sharing our name and some basic information. But a good introduction does more than state facts. It describes who we are and explains what is important to us. For example, a student might identify their favourite subject and explain the reason they enjoy it. The purpose of an introduction is not just to give information but to help another person understand something about who you are. In this module, you will practise introducing yourself clearly and in a way that gives others a real sense of your character and interests.

(Word count: 96. Target words in context: introduce, describe, explain, identify, example, purpose. Register: simple academic prose, slightly above module text level. Topic: directly linked to Module 1 Lesson 1.)

12.2.7 Sample Bridge Text: Week 4

Module theme: Famous people and cause and effect.

Target words: cause, effect, result, therefore, influence, lead to

Many of the people we admire became successful because of both talent and effort. However, it is important to understand what caused their success and what it led to. For example, Marie Curie's determination to study science, despite many obstacles, resulted in two Nobel Prizes and influenced generations of scientists after her. Her example shows that persistence and curiosity can cause significant change. Therefore, when we study inspiring personalities, we should not only identify what they achieved but also explain the effect their work had on the world around them. Success rarely happens by accident. It is usually the result of specific choices and actions.

(Word count: 107. Target words in context: cause, effect, result, therefore, influence, lead to. Register: explanatory academic prose. Topic: directly linked to Module 2 Lesson 7 Inspiring Personalities. Note: also recycles Week 1 words identify, explain.)

A note on cumulative recycling: the bridge texts are designed so that words taught in earlier weeks reappear naturally in later texts. *Describe* and *explain* introduced in Week 1 appear again in Week 4. *Result* introduced in Week 4 reappears in Week 6 when *evidence* and *significant* are introduced. This is not accidental. It reflects the spacing and retrieval principle that vocabulary consolidation requires multiple encounters across time. The bridge texts should be written with this recycling designed in, not left to chance.

13 APPENDIX E: ESTIMATED EFFORT TO REWRITE TEACHER'S GUIDE USING AI

In response to a prompt as to how long it would take (person days) to rewrite the Teacher's Guide using AI to do the rewrite and then having the NIE check through every lesson, match to the Modules, and make their own adjustments, Claude AI responded as follows. Note that this prompt was part of an extended chat with Claude in regard to the new Grade 6 English Curriculum and Syllabus (NIE 2025). The response is written in the first person which is Claude AI.

The following text is taken directly from Clause AI.

13.1 THE SCOPE

The Teacher's Guide covers three modules of ten lessons each — thirty lessons total — plus the General Instructions for Implementation, the assessment framework, and the Progress Check instruments. Each lesson has between four and eight distinct tasks with teacher instructions, help boxes, vocabulary support, and feedback guidance. The assessment lessons (L10 in each module) need separate treatment. The General Instructions need a full rewrite along the lines of Appendix C in the report.

13.2 WHAT I [CLAUDE AI] CAN DO AND HOW FAST

Based on the M1L8 revised lesson plan, which I produced in one exchange, a single lesson rewrite with full annotation takes me roughly the equivalent of 20–30 minutes of directed work — that is, you [instructional designer] giving me the original lesson procedure and the module context, and me producing the revised version with SoR/SoL rationale, differentiation notes, vocabulary pre-teaching sequence, retrieval opener, and exit task. The quality of each rewrite improves if I have the preceding lessons in the same module thread for context.

The three demonstration rewrites in Chapter 4 suggest this is realistic. Each was substantive — seven or eight phases, detailed rationale, differentiation notes — and none required more than one or two exchanges to get right.

13.3 THE ESTIMATE BY COMPONENT

Prompt engineering and setup — before the rewrites begin, someone needs to design the master prompt template that ensures consistency across all thirty lessons. This is one day's work for a person who understands both the SoR/SoL requirements and prompt engineering. Done once, it drives all thirty rewrites.

Lesson rewrites (27 teaching lessons) — at an average of 30–45 minutes per lesson including review, checking the rewrite against the corresponding Module student workbook pages, and making adjustments: roughly 15–20 person-hours. Call it two to three person-days for someone working with me efficiently.

Assessment lesson rewrites (3 x L10) — these need more thought because the assessment architecture needs redesigning not just reformatting. Probably one person-day for all three, given that the framework already exists in Appendix A.

General Instructions rewrite — this is already substantially done in Appendix C. Formatting it properly into the Teacher's Guide structure: half a day.

Progress Check redesign — this is the most complex piece because it requires rethinking the self-assessment format across thirty lessons and adding teacher verification mechanisms. Probably one to one and a half person-days.

NIE review — checking rewrites against Modules and making adjustments — this is the human bottleneck. Someone with subject expertise needs to read each revised lesson procedure against the corresponding student workbook to verify that the SoR/SoL additions are consistent with what the Module actually contains — that vocabulary pre-teaching targets words that actually appear in the lesson text, that the retrieval opener draws on content actually covered in the previous lesson in that thread, and so on. At thirty lessons, with the assessment revisions and General Instructions, and assuming a reviewer who knows the Modules well: roughly four to five person-days for a thorough review, or two to three person-days for a lighter pass that flags issues for a second round.

Table 8 Estimate to rewrite Grade 6 English Teachers' Guide using AI

Component	Person-days
Prompt engineering and setup	1
Lesson rewrites (27 lessons, AI-assisted)	2–3
Assessment lesson rewrites (3 lessons)	1
General Instructions	0.5
Progress Check redesign	1–1.5
NIE review and adjustment	4–5
Total	**9.5–12**

So roughly **two working weeks** for one person if they are doing both the AI-assisted production and the review, or **one week** if the production and review are split between two people working in parallel.

13.4 The important caveat

The estimate assumes the person working with me has a clear brief before starting — they know which SoR/SoL changes are mandatory, which are desirable, and where the existing lesson structure can be preserved. Without that brief, the first few lessons will take longer as the approach is calibrated, and the review will surface more inconsistencies requiring rework. I would add two to three days for that calibration phase if the team is coming to this fresh rather than having worked through the report thoroughly first.

The other variable is how much NIE wants to change versus retrofit. If the instruction is "add retrieval openers, pre-teach vocabulary, make grammar explicit, restructure peer editing" — a retrofit — the estimate holds. If it becomes "reimagine the lesson from first principles while keeping the topic" — a rewrite — the production time roughly doubles, though the review time stays similar.

Two weeks of focused work to retrofit thirty lessons is, by any measure of traditional curriculum revision, extraordinarily fast. The comparable manual process — a working group, multiple drafts, committee review — would typically take months.

14 APPENDIX F: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Academic Word List (AWL) A list of 570 word families that appear frequently across a wide range of academic texts and disciplines, compiled by Averil Coxhead (2000). AWL words are not subject-specific but are essential for academic reading and writing across all fields. The AWL is a core reference for identifying Tier 2 vocabulary targets for secondary school instruction.

Alphabetic code The system by which the sounds of spoken English (phonemes) are represented by letters and letter combinations (graphemes). English has approximately 44 phonemes but around 250 grapheme combinations to represent them. Mastery of the alphabetic code is the foundation of independent word reading and spelling.

Biologically primary knowledge (BPK) Knowledge and skills that humans acquire naturally through immersion in their environment, without formal instruction — for example, oral language in the mother tongue. BPK does not require explicit teaching. Contrasted with biologically secondary knowledge.

Biologically secondary knowledge (BSK) Knowledge and skills that humans have not evolved to acquire automatically and so must be taught explicitly for example, reading, spelling, and formal grammar. Instructional design for BSK must account for the limitations of working memory and the need for structured, sequenced teaching.

Cognitive load The total mental demand placed on working memory during a learning task. Cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988) distinguishes between intrinsic load (the inherent complexity of the material), extraneous load (unnecessary complexity introduced by poor instructional design), and germane load (effort devoted to forming durable schemata). Effective instructional design minimises extraneous load and sequences intrinsic load so that working memory is not overwhelmed.

Constrained skills Reading skills that are finite, teachable to mastery, and do not continue developing indefinitely, principally phonological awareness, phonics, and decoding. Once taught to mastery they require no further instruction. Contrast with unconstrained skills.

Decoding The process of translating written words into spoken language by applying knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences and spelling patterns. Accurate and automatic decoding is a prerequisite for fluent reading and frees working memory for comprehension.

Elaborative interrogation A learning strategy in which students are asked to explain *why* or *how* something is true, rather than simply *what* it is. Elaborative interrogation strengthens long-term retention by connecting new information to existing knowledge and requiring deeper processing than factual recall.

Explicit instruction A structured, teacher-led approach to teaching in which new knowledge or skills are clearly explained and modelled before students practise them. Explicit instruction follows the gradual release of responsibility sequence (I Do–We Do–You Do) and includes immediate corrective feedback. Contrasted with discovery learning and minimally guided instruction.

Fluency (reading) The ability to read connected text accurately, at an appropriate rate, and with prosodic expression. Reading fluency is the bridge between word recognition and comprehension: as word recognition becomes automatic, cognitive resources are freed for meaning-making. Fluency is not a proxy for reading quality; it is a functional prerequisite for comprehension in extended texts.

Formative assessment Assessment conducted during instruction for the purpose of providing information that adjusts teaching to meet learning needs (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Effective formative assessment generates evidence that reaches the teacher and influences subsequent instruction. Self-assessment without teacher verification does not meet this standard.

Gradual release of responsibility An instructional model in which the teacher begins by taking full responsibility for a task (I Do), then shares responsibility with students through guided practice (We Do), before releasing full responsibility to students for independent work (You Do). Also referred to as the I Do–We Do–You Do sequence. The model is grounded in both SoR and SoL research and is particularly important for novice learners.

Grapheme A letter or combination of letters that represents a single phoneme (sound) in written language. For example, the phoneme /f/ can be represented by the graphemes *f*, *ff*, *ph*, or *gh*. See also: phoneme; alphabetic code.

Interleaving A practice strategy in which different problem types or skill categories are mixed within a single practice session, requiring students to identify which strategy or concept to apply before applying it. Cognitive interleaving strengthens long-term retention and discrimination between concepts. Distinguished in this report from *topic rotation*, which cycles through different content threads without the strategic identification component.

Language comprehension The ability to understand spoken and written language, including vocabulary knowledge, syntactic awareness, background knowledge, and inferential reasoning. Together with word recognition, language comprehension is one of the two components of skilled reading in the Simple View of Reading. Language comprehension continues to develop throughout life (an unconstrained skill).

Lexical bar A threshold concept developed by Corson (1985) referring to the level of vocabulary knowledge — particularly Tier 2 (general academic) vocabulary — required for a learner to read unfamiliar academic texts independently, infer the meaning of new words from context and morphology, and learn new subject content through the medium of English with minimal language mediation. Crossing the lexical before the end of secondary school is a prerequisite for successful English-medium post-secondary study (tertiary or vocational).

Long-term memory The cognitive system in which knowledge, skills, and schemata are stored for future retrieval. Unlike working memory, long-term memory has no known capacity limits. Learning is defined as a change in long-term memory: information that is not stored there has not been learned. Retrieval practice and spaced review strengthen long-term memory consolidation.

Metacognition Awareness and regulation of one's own thinking and learning processes. Metacognitive skills include knowing which strategies to apply to a task, monitoring comprehension during reading, and evaluating the accuracy of one's own knowledge. Metacognitive vocabulary (e.g. *infer, summarise, evaluate*) must be explicitly taught before students can use it for self-assessment.

Morphology The study of meaningful units within words — including base forms, prefixes, suffixes, and inflections. Morphological knowledge is a powerful tool for automatic word recognition and vocabulary development: a student who knows the suffix *-tion* can access the meaning of hundreds of academic nouns. Morphology instruction from Grade 6 is the most direct available route to Tier 2 vocabulary growth.

New General Service List (NGSL) An updated high-frequency vocabulary list developed by Browne, Culligan, and Phillips (2013), drawn from the 1.6 billion-word Cambridge English Corpus. The NGSL contains approximately 2,800 word families that account for around 92% of the words in most everyday English texts. Used alongside the AWL to identify high-priority vocabulary for instruction. NGSL excludes academic domain specific vocabulary but AWL includes this.

Orthographic mapping The cognitive process by which the brain forms a precise, stable representation of a written word in long-term memory, connecting its spelling, pronunciation, and meaning into a single stored unit. Orthographic mapping underpins both fluent word recognition when reading and accurate spelling and is the mechanism by which explicit phonics and spelling instruction accelerates vocabulary consolidation.

Phoneme The smallest unit of sound in spoken language. English has approximately 44 phonemes. Phoneme awareness, that is the ability to identify and manipulate individual phonemes in spoken words, is the oral foundation for phonics instruction.

Phonological awareness An umbrella term for sensitivity to the sound structure of spoken language, including awareness of syllables, onset-rime, and individual phonemes. Phonological awareness at the phoneme level (phonemic awareness) is the prerequisite for phonics instruction and is the primary oral skill that underpins learning to read and spell an alphabetic language.

Phonics A method of reading and spelling instruction based on the systematic teaching of grapheme-phoneme correspondences and their application to decoding and encoding words. Systematic and explicit phonics is the most research-supported approach to teaching word reading and word recognition.

Progressive education An educational philosophy originating in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that emphasises student-led discovery, experiential learning, and creative production over direct instruction and memorisation. While the goals of progressive education such as developing autonomous, critical thinkers, are legitimate long-term outcomes, the instructional methods it prescribes are not appropriate for novice learners who have not yet acquired the foundational knowledge that independent learning requires.

Retrieval practice A learning strategy in which students are required to recall information from long-term memory without access to notes or the original text. Retrieval practice, including quizzes, brain dumps, and recall tasks, strengthens memory consolidation and improves long-term retention significantly more than re-reading or recognition tasks. Distinguished from *revision*, which often involves re-exposure to material rather than active recall.

Schema An organised mental framework stored in long-term memory that groups related knowledge and allows it to be retrieved as a unit. Schemata develop through repeated encounters with related information and are the cognitive basis for efficient learning: new information is learned more easily when it can be connected to an existing schema. Explicit instruction, worked examples, and retrieval practice all support schema formation.

Science of Learning (SoL) An interdisciplinary body of research drawing on cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and educational psychology, that investigates how students learn and which instructional practices most effectively support learning. Key SoL principles applied in this report include cognitive load theory, the worked-example effect, retrieval practice, spaced practice, interleaving, and elaborative interrogation.

Science of Reading (SoR) A converging body of research from cognitive psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, and education that explains how the brain learns to read and which instructional practices most effectively support reading development. Key SoR principles applied in this report include the Simple View of Reading, systematic phonics, reading fluency, explicit vocabulary instruction, and comprehension strategy instruction.

Simple View of Reading A theoretical framework (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) expressing reading comprehension as the product of two components: word recognition and language comprehension. If either component is weak, reading comprehension will be weak regardless of the strength of the other. The Simple View of Reading is the foundational model underpinning structured literacy and SoR-aligned curriculum design.

Spaced practice A learning strategy in which practice of a skill or review of content is distributed across time rather than concentrated in a single session (massed practice). Spaced practice significantly improves long-term retention because the effortful retrieval required after a gap strengthens memory consolidation.

Tier 1 vocabulary Everyday, conversational words that most speakers of a language acquire through natural oral interaction without formal instruction, for example, *dog, run, happy, big*. Tier 1 words do not typically require explicit vocabulary instruction.

Tier 2 vocabulary General academic words that appear across many subjects and text types but are not common in everyday conversation, for example, *analyse, significant, sequence, influence, feature, evidence*. Tier 2 words are the language of schooling and academic discourse and must be explicitly taught. They are the primary vocabulary target for this report's critique and retrofit recommendations.

Tier 3 vocabulary Domain-specific technical terms that are essential within a particular subject area but rarely appear outside it, for example, *photosynthesis, denominator, isosceles*. Tier 3 words are best taught explicitly within subject-area instruction as they arise in context.

Unconstrained skills Reading and language skills that continue to develop throughout life and have no definable endpoint, principally vocabulary, background knowledge, and inferential reasoning. Because they are unconstrained, they require ongoing instruction across all grades and all subjects, not just in early reading programs. Contrasted with constrained skills.

Word recognition The ability to accurately and automatically read and identify the meaning of written words. Word recognition depends on phonological awareness, phonics knowledge, and orthographic mapping, and together with language comprehension constitutes the two core components of skilled reading in the Simple View of Reading.

Working memory The cognitive workspace in which incoming information is held and actively processed. Working memory has very limited capacity and duration, particularly when processing novel information. Instructional design must protect working memory by managing cognitive load, breaking new content into manageable chunks, and building on prior knowledge stored in long-term memory.

Worked example A fully solved problem or completed task provided to students as a model, typically accompanied by a teacher think-aloud that makes the cognitive process visible. Worked examples reduce the burden on working memory by showing students how to complete a task before requiring them to do so independently. The worked-example effect is one of the most robust findings in cognitive load theory.