

**English Syllabus  
for  
Grades 11 and 12**

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**GECFDD, Ministry of Education, Addis Ababa, May 2008**

## **Rationale**

### **Why do Ethiopian students study English?**

English has been retained in the educational system because it is vital to for the economic development of Ethiopia. English is the language of wider communication across the globe in international relations, science and technology, commerce and trade. It is also the medium of instruction for secondary and higher education in Ethiopia

### **What is the new syllabus based on?**

The English syllabus for grades 11-12 is based on the new curriculum framework for Ethiopian schools and on the needs assessment conducted prior to revision work. The syllabus has also considered international content standards for a similar age and grade level of learners.

### **What are the main changes?**

The main changes to the previous English syllabus are:

- The content has been reduced and teachers should be able to cover the content in the allotted time.
- The syllabus is based on minimum learning competencies for each grade against which students will be assessed. Each unit provides the content and activities needed to build up students' competency.
- There is spiral progression throughout the four grades of secondary: the four language skills, grammatical and vocabulary items and other language components are taught at increasing levels of difficulty and sophistication within the topic areas. This

spiral progression is demonstrated in the minimum learning competences and the topic flow chart.

- The content is relevant to all students whether they are entering higher education or the world of work
- The syllabus demonstrates practical implementation of active learning and learner-centredness. It is designed to inform the production of quality textbooks that will inspire confidence and develop competence in teachers so they can use a broader range of methodologies in their teaching.
- The approach to language teaching is communicative and skills based: students learn and practise language which is meaningful to them and which has a real purpose and context. For this reason the focus is on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Grammar, vocabulary and social expressions are integrated into practice of these skills. Language is about communicating with others and learners are encouraged to interact with each other in a variety of patterns: pairs, groups and plenary. The activities are also designed to encourage students' natural curiosity and appetite for discovery together with enjoyment of learning through debates, presentations, surveys, roleplays, stories, projects and research activities appropriate to their age.

### **What is the new approach?**

The new approach contains a number of aspects that are demonstrated in the MLCs, the syllabus and its activities

### **1. Psychological preparation**

This includes:

- motivating students to learn English by using interesting and enjoyable methods
- learning geared to: communicating in English in both speaking and writing and using the language creatively
- building on learners' natural curiosity and desire to try things out
- taking account of students' capacity for imagination and creativity
- developing in learners sensitivity to foreign languages and cultures
- raising their awareness of the mother tongue and English
- developing in them a positive attitude to language learning
- talking about how different students learn and specific strategies to enhance learning

### **2. Attitude goals**

Attitude is an important aspect of language learning and therefore the new syllabus. Students should want to communicate and find pleasure and confidence in exploring English. They should anticipate or predict what comes next and be willing to 'have a go'. They should not be afraid of taking risks or making mistakes. Finally they should reflect on their actions and learn from them.

### **3. Content goals**

Content is both topic-based and linguistic. Topics have been chosen that are interesting and enjoyable, relevant to Ethiopian life and complementary to what students are studying in other subjects. All four language skills are developed but in grades 11 and 12 there is a growing focus on reading and writing. Language chosen is functional, relevant and realistic for older teenagers and young adults.

### **4. Lessons and materials**

These include activities and tasks that:

- have a clear learning outcome
- can be personalised according to students' interests
- are graded, to facilitate movement from the cognitively simple to the more demanding
- are contextualised and meaningful, with a real purpose and audience in mind
- encourage creative, productive and enjoyable use of language
- are designed to enable increasing student independence and choice
- stimulate learners
- engage students' minds and keep them occupied
- allow students to respond to language input by doing
- provide opportunities for interaction to develop fluency
- enable teachers to choose a style that suits the mood
- cater for different modes of learning: verbal, visual, musical, logical, physical, interpersonal etc
- vary work on the same topic
- vary the organisation of learning (students working in pairs, groups, plenary)
- reuse materials for a different purpose
- repeat patterns (e.g. words or phrases) which promote learning
- repeat rhythms that reinforce English sounds, stress and intonation

## What are the main features of the syllabus?

### 1. Minimum Learning Competencies

The Minimum Learning Competencies (MLCs) are the skill levels we expect all the students to have reached within each topic at the end of each grade. Some students will demonstrate abilities beyond the MLCs.

### 2. Topic flow chart and content map

The topic flow chart shows the spiral progression of the competencies within a number of topics. The content map shows the content to be learnt in each unit at each grade.

### 3. Units and period allocation

Each grade is broken up into a number of units based around a topic. Competencies in language and skills are built up within a topic as topics or related issues recur a number of times throughout the 4 grades of secondary.

In grades 11 and 12 there will also be 12 periods for revision. The revision will provide teachers and students with opportunities to recycle language and skills and assess competencies. In these units there should be a variety of activities across the skills and integrated tasks to practise and assess what has been learnt. Activities should be enjoyable and engaging but should also include examples of national test types such as multiple choice. This is especially important in the second half of Grade 12.

Each unit is divided into 12 periods based on a 34 week school year. Regular, short slots of language learning during the week are likely to be more effective than a longer, more concentrated slot once a week. In grades 11 and 12 students will have 6 periods of English per week.

Below is the proposed period allocation across the units. However, while teachers should ensure they finish the syllabus, exact period allocation is flexible. Teachers should respond to the needs of their students in different skills and topics.

#### Grade 11 (6 periods a week)

Units 1-12	16 periods (each)
Revision	12 periods (in total)
Total periods	204

#### Grade 12 (6 periods a week)

Units 1-12	16 periods (each)
Revision	12 periods (in total)
Total periods	204

### 4. Learning outcomes, language focus and vocabulary

Each unit starts with a learning outcome related to the topic and which is applicable across the skills. Each unit also has a language focus divided into grammar, vocabulary and social expressions. The grammar focus will be the main structures/items that are revised or introduced in the unit. The vocabulary focus lists the main topic areas of vocabulary and social expressions are the main functional structures.

For vocabulary, examples of words in the topic areas can be found at the end of each grade. It is important to stress that these are only suggested examples. Teachers can choose relevant lexical items from this list and add items appropriately. Students do not have to learn all the words from the list. Students should also be encouraged to keep vocabulary notebooks. (See Learning Strategies).

Teachers should recycle grammar, vocabulary and social expressions as much as possible. This can be done through speaking activities, games, tests etc. at the beginning and end of lessons.

### 5. Competencies

The left hand column of the syllabus lists the relevant competencies for each unit. These are derived from the Minimum Learning Competencies for each grade. Teachers use these competencies to assess students (see assessment).

### 6. Skills

For clarity of focus each unit of the syllabus is broken up into

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing
- Additional Learning Strategies

**It is important to stress that this is not the order in which activities should be conducted.** Indeed over the course of the unit teachers should provide a variety of skills practice both within and between lessons.

Some activities do need to precede others: listening and speaking activities often provide the context for the introduction of new vocabulary, grammar or social expressions. In addition to this, activities in different skills are often connected and may need to be followed consecutively e.g. reading texts often provide models for writing activities. However, although textbook writers and teachers need to bear this in mind, they are free to conduct the activities in the order that will best suit their classes and give variety. Moreover, although the syllabus offers a wealth of activities in all the skill that most teachers will find useful, it is important to point out that teachers and textbooks writer are also free to adapt and change the activities as they see fit as long as the relevant Minimum Learning Competencies are met. If textbook writers or teachers need suggestions on a possible order of activities for each unit, the Curriculum Department will be happy to provide it.

### **7. Learning Strategies**

Learning strategies (or study skills) are the skills students need not only to improve their competency in English and therefore their ability to access other subjects through the medium of English, but also to improve their ability to learn generally. The aim of developing learning strategies is for students to understand how they learn and ultimately for them to become independent learners.

Grades 9 and 10 built on the primary syllabus in continuing to developing linguistic sub skills within tasks but also included additional activities that aimed to make these sub-skills explicit to the students. Students were given the opportunity to discuss and assess their strengths and weaknesses in each skill/sub-skill as well as try out new ways of learning. Moreover, the syllabus also extended learning strategies to the areas of vocabulary and grammar and generic study skills such as learning styles and time management.

Grades 11 and 12 develop and extend the range of learning strategies even further to meet the needs of students' future careers in higher education and work. In Grade11 each area of the English language has an in-depth focus

and students discuss a number of issues within each area which can affect and enhance their learning and motivation. In Grade 12 students focus on some of the subtleties of the English language such as register, intonation and similar grammar structures. As in grades 9 and 10, students set themselves goals and later reflect on whether they achieved them. The last three units of Grade 12 concentrate on exam practice rather than learning strategies.

Teachers are encouraged to support students as much as possible in the area of learning strategies. It is also essential for teachers to suggest and provide students with as much access to the English speaking environment as possible.

### **8. Language Content/items**

On each page of the syllabus the middle column of content/language items contains the grammar, language patterns, social expressions, vocabulary or text type to be learnt in each unit to build up students' competency within each topic and skill area. Examples of the language items students are expected to produce or respond to in order complete an activity are also given in this column. These are located across the skills but more often appear under listening or speaking as the communicative approach would generally expect them to be introduced in these skills first. Teachers should clearly present the new language within context and check understanding before proceeding to the practice activities. Under reading and writing, the language content also contains the text type (such as sentences, paragraphs, newspaper article, story, descriptive passage etc.) the students will be working with.

### **9. Language activities and resources**

The third column contains activities and resources for the teacher to use with students to facilitate learning of the corresponding content/ language items and build up the corresponding competencies. The resources that are needed are included in the activities.

As mentioned above, the syllabus is not set out in the order it should be followed. However, when students are introduced to new language items, controlled practice of these discrete items should precede freer speaking activities. This is to give the students the chance to practise the meaning, use and manipulation of the target language.

Occasionally there are suggestions for activities which may not be possible in all classes, these are 'optional'. However, as with all the activities, teachers are free to adapt them to meet the needs or situations they face.

With all the skills students should be encouraged to work on activities in a variety of interaction patterns: pairs, threes, small groups, larger groups and plenary. For listening and reading activities students should check and compare their work together, practising their English as they do so. For reading, students should read aloud in pairs and small groups rather than reading silently. The skill of writing is as much about process as product. Indeed Secondary English follows the seven stages of writing model (think, brainstorm, plan, draft, check, rewrite, proofread) and students must be encouraged to follow this model both individually and in pairs/groups for every writing activity.

### **10. Assessment**

Teachers are expected to assess students on a continuous basis. Many of the activities can be used for assessment as well as practice. Teachers should keep records of student performance in class and regularly take in notebooks to mark work and record achievement. At the end of each unit there are suggested assessment activities, some of which are taken from the unit (mainly for writing) and some of which are additional.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, each grade will have XX revision units which will also provide the teacher and students with opportunities for assessment. It is not only the teacher who can assess; students should also be encouraged to do self and peer assessment activities.

### **11. Assessing speaking**

Assessing speaking is vital for providing feedback to the students and for informing schemes of work and lesson plans. Ensuring that students are aware of their competencies and how they can improve their language is also essential now that English is the medium of instruction for other subjects.

Assessing speaking should not be formal or intimidating. The teacher should just listen in on pairs and groups, provide them with feedback and record progress. The teacher should not focus on mistakes but rather on whether the students have reached the competency level and can be

understood. This means the focus is on communicating the intended message not fluency or accuracy.

In large classes assessing speaking can be challenging. Below are some ideas to address these challenges and provide the teachers with at least one assessment opportunity per child per term.

- At the beginning of each term, the teacher divides the class into speaking/assessment groups (of about 10 students) according to where they sit in the class (this can be rows or groups of students whichever is more practical). For all speaking activities, students form pairs, threes or groups within these groups. For assessment the teacher concentrates on one group per week. He/she can assess a number of students each lesson and record comments.
- In each grade there are a number of activities where students are working in small groups. As long as the teacher is satisfied that discipline will not be affected, students can be pulled out of these activities to be assessed for speaking.
- Some of the writing activities may take a lesson or two. Once more the teacher could listen to 10 pairs of students perform a speaking/listening activity in this time.

### **12. Assessing writing**

Assessing writing is vital for the same reasons as assessing speaking. However with large classes it can often be burdensome and challenging to mark. The following are some ideas:

- Develop marking schemes to use when correcting e.g. letters/symbols such as 'Sp', 'T' or ^ which denote the type of mistake ('Sp' = spelling mistake, 'T' = tense and ^ = missing word) but not the actual correction. Students then correct the mistakes for themselves or with partners. This process takes a lot less time and encourages student awareness of the mistakes they are making.
- Teachers don't need to correct everything – indeed some days teachers may just focus on one area e.g. tenses or vocabulary so that students hone in on these areas of the language.
- Students should be encouraged to check their own and others' writing before they hand in work. This follows the 7 stage model

of writing (think, brainstorm, plan, draft, check, rewrite, proofread) and encourages them to become more independent learners.

- For some assignments students can work in pairs or groups and be assessed as a pair or group. This strategy will cut down the marking considerably but must be used in conjunction with assessing students individually.
- Assess students in class time as they are doing writing activities (using the 7 stage model) – success is just as much about process as product

### **13. Assessing listening and reading**

Assessing the receptive skills is also vital, especially since students' access to other subjects is mainly through these skills. Teachers can assess the competencies for listening and reading both informally and formally. Continuous assessment can take place as the students are doing the activities and through regular checking of their notebooks. More formal assessment should be done through the end of unit assessment activities and in the revision units.

Assessing listening and reading is not too time-consuming as exercises can be devised that are easy to mark. However teachers do need to ensure that all the range of competencies are being assessed and that what they are assessing is reading or listening i.e. if it is note-taking that is being assessed, it is the skill of understanding the content that is key not the quality of the notes made.

### **14. What is the difference between Grades 9 and 10 and Grades 11 and 12?**

Since the majority of students in Grades 11 and 12 will be aiming for higher education where English continues to be the medium of instruction, there are a number of differences between Grades 9 and 10 and Grades 11 and 12. Firstly students need to have a wider range of grammatical and lexical competence to cope with future studies. The units in Grades 11 and 12 therefore extend and introduce more new language particularly vocabulary.

Students do more work on lexical sets, affixes, phrasal verbs, dictionary skills and the grammar of vocabulary, all of which contribute to developing the sub-skill of inference, crucial to understanding reading texts with unknown words. Moreover, in vocabulary, grammar and social expressions, students start to look at the (often subtle) differences between words, phrases, structures and pronunciation to extend their range and choice of language to match their wider and increasing use of it.

Secondly, in Grade 11 but especially in Grade 12, there is more focus on reading and writing to prepare students for higher education. Reading texts are mostly authentic, longer, more academic and on less familiar subjects than at grades 9 and 10. This is to develop and practise reading sub-skills and improve students' confidence to cope with this key academic skill. Students writing skills in both fluency and accuracy are also developed. They practise writing on a range of topics using a variety of text types as this will also be an essential part of their future studies. Grades 9 and 10 provided students with a lot of support in writing through the use of scaffolds and models. Although this methodology continues in the early units of Grades 11 and 12, particularly with new text types, the aim is to gradually make students more independent. The focus is on encouraging them to use the 7 stage model of writing so they can correct and improve their own work.

Thirdly the focus on longer and more academic texts is also reflected in speaking and listening activities. Students listen to longer texts, often lectures on unfamiliar subjects and spend more time developing and practising their note-taking skills. Discussions and debates are often around topical issues related to other academic subjects. Finally as has already been demonstrated, there is an increasing focus on students' independence. There is more work on learning strategies and more activities with students talking explicitly about language, including grammar, and working out the rules for themselves.