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A bilingual English-Sesotho rubric explanation guide for the marking of Sesotho home language creative writing essays

Abstract

Creative writing essays in Sesotho Home Language classes are marked using rubrics. Nevertheless, using the same rubric does not necessarily automate a uniform interpretation of the rubric. It is important to clearly define rubric criteria for teachers in order to counter the problem of misalignment in the usage of the rubric to mark learner essays. This article presents and explains a rubric explanation guide for the marking of Sesotho Grade 10 Home Language creative writing essays based on the interpretations of nine teachers from six schools in the Metsimaholo education district. The explanation guide is presented bilingually in English and Sesotho. This article presents a more in-depth explanation guide for the rubric which was proposed in Sibeko (2016). The aim hereof is to ensure that teachers comparably understand rubric criteria and approach marking from the same point of view. For the purpose of this article, the rubric used by teachers in the said district is discussed. Both novice and experienced teachers stand to benefit from this explained rubric guide.

Keywords: Rubric guide; Sesotho marking; Creative writing; Sesotho home language; Correction codes

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1.   Introduction

The creative writing paper in Sesotho Home Language focuses on essays and transactional texts such as letters and diary entries. This article is restricted to the aspect of essay marking. According to the Standard Assessment Guidelines (Department of Basic Education, DBE, 2008a:02), feedback should be provided to allow learners to learn from their own performance amongst other things. Spencer (2009) and Lipnevich and Smith (2008) prove that feedback is useful in the production of improved final drafts in process writing. As such, in order to achieve this goal of helping improve the final products of learners' creative writing essays, teachers use rubrics and correction codes. This is an advancement that was brought forward by the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement in 2006. Unfortunately, even though many policies are brought forward, in most cases their implementation is a challenge. Contrary to this prevalent issue of implementation, Sibeko (2016:202) reports that the use of correction codes and rubrics in the provision of feedback to creative writing in Sesotho Home Language has been implemented by teachers. Participating teachers in Sibeko (2016) name moderation by subject advisors as one of the factors that enforce consistency and standardise their marking, thereby ensuring that the policy is implemented. Unfortunately, the implementation of the rubrics policy only informs that rubrics are used. It does not provide much insight into whether teachers use the rubrics correctly or if their understanding of the rubric criteria is comparable. On the bright side, proof of implementation means that steps can be taken to refine the practice of using rubrics. Both novice and experienced teachers at the participating school are familiar with and are already using the rubric under discussion in this article. It is therefore important that they be trained to use it in a more standardised manner. As such, this article stands a better chance of benefiting teachers because it is in alignment with current practices.

In the Further Education and Training band, the creative writing paper accounts for 100 marks which is equivalent to 40% of the overall exam mark. If the marks awarded in the creative writing paper are undeservingly high, the final mark will then be inflated too. Correctly marking this creative writing paper will then even to a less extent, counter the concern raised by Van Rooy and Coetzee van Rooy (2015:07), that school exit marks for African home languages are inflated in South Africa. Furthermore, it will ensure that marks for each rubric criterion are not influenced by other rubric criteria, which is a concern raised by Hattingh (2009:207-8). The remedy would then be to break down the focus of each rubric criterion (Hattingh and Van der Walt, 2013:88).

According to Hattingh (2009:08), the rubrics used in schools were produced by experts in the Department of Basic Education and have not been validated. By validation, it is meant that it is not proven whether it measures what it is claimed to measure (Weir, 2015:15). The same applies to Sesotho Home Language rubrics which are supplied to schools through subject advisors and learning facilitators. Not much is done to train teachers on how to interpret the rubrics. A discussion of already marked scripts often opens the discussion of the rubric and expected marking practices [this is the process of post-marking moderation by senior educators and subject advisors]. Unarguably, before

criticising teachers on their use or incorrect use of the rubric, it is important to improve their training first. According to Louw (2008:108), one of the aspects of feedback to learner writing that needs to be refined is the teachers' focus in terms of what they are actually expected to mark. This can be done by teaching them how to use the rubric to measure or assess achievement for rubric criteria, clearly specifying what they are expected to assess under each criterion. One such attempt at this would be to provide a rubric guide as an addendum to the rubric in both textbooks and assessment memoranda. This is proven to be an effective alternative for training workshops on the use of the rubric in Hattingh (2009). In her study, instead of holding face to face training sessions with participating markers, the author used rubric guides in order to channel teachers on what they needed to assess under each criterion.

It is not always possible to conduct training sessions/workshops on how to use rubrics for teachers. As a result, not all teachers are clear on the interpretation of rubric criteria. Some teachers end up confused and misinterpreting the rubric. A problem arises when teachers use the same rubrics with different understandings and mark with divergent convictions. The marks become subjective instead of relevant. This article aims to assist teachers on how to approach using the rubric in Sesotho Home Language creative writing essays. The rubric guide is informed by interpretations from teachers participating in a larger study [*see*, Sibeko, 2016:196]. Although a good first attempt, *Ibid* presents the rubric explanation guide monolingually in English. This would therefore not prove useful to Sesotho Home Language teachers who lack sufficient competency in English. As a result, to remedy this deficiency, this article presents the rubric guide bilingually, in both English and Sesotho. However, for purposes of access, the discussion is in English. Even so, the provision of the guide in both languages will prove more useful by being accessible to Sesotho teachers and open for critique by a larger audience beyond the confines of the Sesotho community.

2.   A brief overview of literature on rubrics

According to Andrade et al. (2008:03), a rubric is a document that clearly indicates expectations for an assignment by listing the criteria of marking, showing what counts in the assignment and what does not, and describes the levels of achievement from poor to excellent. It allows teachers to pretend to be grading machines by allowing them to act as though what they are doing is exact and objective (Kohn, 2006:12).

Unfortunately, according to Lumley (2002), the rubric's impact is restricted by the fact that markers mark based on their feeling about the text, not on the actual features of a marking scale. Contrary to this statement is that of Hattingh (2009:154) which assumes that common interpretation of the text and the descriptors in the rubric allows the markers to award marks based on the best fit. Alderson et al. (1995:105), Lumley (2002:248) and Knoch et al. (2007:27) report that training can help standardise marks and improve consistency in marking. One way of achieving the standardisation of marks

and improving consistency in marking would be to clarify rubric criteria during training, which would then help markers to achieve consistency in their understanding of rubric criterion achievement levels (Hattingh, 2009:160; Weigle, 1994:249).

The rubric can be used to help the writer during the writing stages and the marker during the marking stages (Rodriguez, 2008:171-2). As such there are two broad uses of the marks awarded by the use of the rubric; (i) to help the assessee in the writing process, and (ii) for judging the product at the end of writing. It is broadly termed assessment *for* and assessment *of* writing.

The most prominent issue in using rubrics has to do with the extent to which the rubric is understood by the markers. Andrade and Ying Du (2005:01) state that even though teachers may hold the same rubric at hand, they hold different views of what a rubric is. However, Hattingh (2009:157) states that trained raters who use clearly defined descriptors are more likely to provide better judgement of the text than untrained raters who use the same rubric. This article therefore aims to provide some guidance to teachers on what each of the rubric descriptors refers to and how each could be assessed. This is done through prompting teachers to ask themselves specific questions regarding each rubric criterion. The data under discussion in this paper were collected following the method discussed in the section following.

3. Method of data collection

The data discussed herein were collected as part of a bigger study by Sibeko [1](2016). A total of nine teachers from six schools in the Metsimaholo education district took part in the study. Permission to access participants was granted by the Research division of the Free State Department of Basic Education, the principals, the heads of departments and the Ethics committee of the University. Data were collected using three instruments. First, questionnaires were administered. Both qualitative and quantitative data were then obtained through open and closed questions. Open questions were used to collect qualitative data while closed questions were used to collect quantitative data. Second, a set of quantitative data were collected using an analysis of sample scripts marked by participating teachers as part of their formal learner assessment for the year 2015. Each teacher was requested to identify one class from his/her allocated classes at school, identify three essay which received the highest marks, three essays that received average marks and three essays that received the lowest marks. The essays were written based on different essay topics as per school. The aim was to investigate teachers' use of correction codes and the relation between the use of the codes and the final mark for each essay.

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1   See reference list for full description.

Finally, individual interviews with the participating teachers were carried out. The interviews were recorded with permission from the participants and a permission form was signed by each. The researcher then transcribed the interviews. The qualitative data were analysed through coding of emergent themes from the teachers' responses. The codes were generated through the use of Atlas.ti version 7. The codes were first identified by the researcher after carefully studying the responses from the teachers. They were then verified by three supervisors and alterations were made. Finally, three external anonymous examiners verified the codes and made suggestions for improvement as per need. The closed questions and the marked scripts were analysed using measures of frequency.

This article focuses on the set of data which informed the production of a rubric explanation guide to one of the current rubrics used in the marking of Sesotho Grade 10 home language creative writing essays. The data sets that were used in the production of the rubric guide were the qualitative responses to relevant questionnaire questions and the interviews.

4.   The codes used to give feedback to learners

Markers of Sesotho Home Language creative writing are given the following a set of correction codes. The codes used are as follows:

a)   **|** to divide words written as compound whereas they are separate;

(b)   **-, +** to combine words that are written as separate whereas they ought to be written as one;

(c)   **mn** for incorrect orthography;

(d)   **mp** for incorrect spelling;

(e)   **mt** for incorrect or missing punctuation;

(f)   **p** for incorrectly used language or unusual language choices;

(g)   **^** for a missing word or part of a word missing between words;

(h)   **//** to separate or divide paragraphs;

(i)   ↰↱ to re-order paragraphs.

The first districting factor used in the discussion of the rubric explanation guide is based on the codes used to give feedback to learners as presented above. As it can be deduced from the codes, some of the aspects that would be regarded as similar are separated in

practice, for instance the aspect of orthography and spelling. The discussion of the rubric explanation guide follows:

5. The rubric explanation guide

The following table shows the three marking criteria used for marking Sesotho Home Language essays in the FET level. The mark distribution for each of the three criteria and the keys written on learner essays in providing feedback on the three rubric criteria are also provided.

Table 1: Categories *of marks used to provide feedback to learner essays in Sesotho grade 10, with a translation into English*

Makgetha a tekanyetso Categories of assessment	Matshwao Marks	Senotlolo Key
Dikahare le Moralo Content and planning	30	DM. =
Puo le setaele le Tekolobotjha Language, style and editing/proofreading	15	PST =
Sebopeho Structure	05	Seb. =
Matshwao ohle/ Total marks		**50**

The majority of marks are awarded for the criterion of content and planning which accounts for 60% of the overall mark. The criterion of language, style and editing/proofreading accounts for 30% of the final mark for the essay. The final 10% of the essay is allocated for the criterion of structure. The discussion of the different criteria of the rubric follows.

Criteria 1: Content and planning

The first rubric criterion [content and planning] is presented in Table 2 and Table 3 following:

Table 2: *The criterion of content and planning in Sesotho*

Makgetha a ho lekanyetsa	Kgato 7 E babatsehang	Kgato 6 Phihlelo e kgabane	Kgato 5 Phihlello e ntle	Kgato 4 Phihlello e mahareng	Kgato 3 phihlello e foofo	Kgato 2 Karolwana feela	Kgato 1 Ha ho phihlello
	80%-100%	70%-79%	60%-69%	50%-59%	40%-49%	30%-39%	0-29%
Moralo, Dikahare/ Difuperweng	Dikahare tse babatsehang tsa boiqapelo; mehopolo e matla e phepetsang monahano	Dikahare ke tse ntle, mehopolo key a boiqapelo, e tebileng mme e tsosa tjantjello.	Dikahare di a kgahlisa, di momahane hantle; mehopolo e tsosa tjantjello, e a kgodisa.	Dikahare tse loketseng, di momahane ho lekaneng; mehopolo e tsosa thahasello, boiqapelo bo kgotsofatsang.	Dikahare di mahareng feela, momahano ha e ntle; mehopolo boholo e a amoheleha; boiqapelo bo a haella.	Dikahare ha di a hlaka ka nako tsohle; mehopolo e seng mekae, e a iphethaka.	Dikahare boholo di tswile lekoteng; ha ho momahano; mehopolo e kgathatsa matla, e a phethakwa.
Matshwao: [30]	Moralo le/kapa mekgwaritso e hlahisa moqoqo o babatsehang	Moralo le/ kapa mo/ mekgwaritso di hlahisitse moqoqo o motle haholo.	Moralo le/ kapa mo/ mekgwaritso di hlahisitse moqoqo o motle.	Moralo le/ kapa mo/ mekgwaritso di hlahisitse moqoqo o kgotsofatsang.	Moralo le/ kapa mo/ mekgwaritso dihlahisitse moqoqo o mahareng feela.	Moqoqo o ntse o sa amohelehe kgatong ya PL, le ha o radilwe; ha o a bopeha hantle.	Moralo kapa mekgwaritso e a haella; moqoqo o bopilwe ka tsela e sa kgahliseng.

The English translation of the first criterion [translated from table 2 above] is presented in Table 3 following:

Table 3: *The criterion of content and planning in English*

Marking criteria	Level 7 Outstanding 80%-100%	Level 6 Meritorious 70%-79%	Level 5 Substantial 60%-69%	Level 4 Adequate 50%-59%	Level 3 Moderate 40%-49%	Level 2 Elementary 30%-39%	Level 1 Not achieved 0-29%
Content and planning	Content exceptional, highly original; ideas: Thought provoking, mature; coherent development of topic; vivid, exceptional detail.	Content commendable, original; ideas: imaginative, interesting; logical development of details.	Content sound, reasonably coherent; ideas: interesting, convincing.	Content appropriate, adequately coherent; ideas: interesting, adequately original.	Content mediocre, gaps incoherence, ideas mostly relevant, limited originality.	Content not always clear, lacks coherence; ideas: few ideas, often repetitive.	Content largely irrelevant. No coherence; ideas: tedious, repetitive, off topic.
Marks: [30]	Planning and/or drafting resulted in a flawlessly presentable essay.	Planning and/or drafting resulted in a well-crafted and presentable essay.	Planning and/or drafting resulted in a very good and presentable essay.	Planning and/or drafting resulted in a satisfactorily presented essay.	Planning and/or drafting resulted in a moderately presentable and coherent essay.	Inadequate for HL[1] level, although planned/ or drafted, it is not well presented.	Inadequate planning and/or drafting, weak; essay unsatisfactorily constructed.

In order to help teachers in marking the rubric aspects pointed out in the first rubric criterion, the rubric explanation guide suggested in Sibeko (2016:196-7), prompts the teacher to answer a few questions. A modified version of the set of questions pertaining to the first criterion is presented in Tables 4 and 5 following:

Table 4: *The explanatory rubric guide to the criterion of content and planning*

Dintlha tsa sehlooho tsa makgetha	Ditataiso ho motshwayi
Moralo	Ebe moithuti o hlahisitse bopaki ba moralo qalong ya moqoqo? Ebe ho totobetse ho tswa moqoqong hore moithuti o radile moqoqo wa hae? Ebe nyalano e teng pakeng sa moralo le moqoqo?
Dikahare	Ebe moqoqo o hlahisa dintlha? Ebe dikahare (dintlha tsa tshekatsheko) di tsamaisana le dithloko tsa sehlooho? Ebe tatelano ya dintlha moqoqong e nepahetse? Ebe moqoqo o totobatsa bokgoni ba moithuti ba ho iqapela le ho iketsetsa? E kaba maemo a boiqapelo a hlahiswang ke moithuti a totobetse? Ebe moithuti o sebedisa mekgabisopuo le maele/dikapolelo? Haeba o a disebedisa, e be di tlatseta dikahare tsa moqoqo hantle? Ebe karaburetso e sebedisitsweng moqoqong e hlakile?

An English version of the rubric guide for the first rubric criterion follows in Table 5:

Table 5: The explanatory rubric guide to the cr*iterion of content and planning in English*

Main aspects of the criterion	Guidelines to the marker
Planning	Does the learner present the proof of planning at the beginning of the essay? Is it obvious from the essay that the learner planned the essay? Is there a link between the planning and the actual essay?
Content	Is the essay factual? Do the contents (facts or points discussed) adhere to the heading requirements? Is there logic in the essay? Does the essay indicate the learner's ability to create and to be innovative? Is the level of creativity exhibited by the learner notable? Does the learner use figures of speech and/or idiomatic expressions? If yes, do they contribute to the overall content of the essay? Is the imagery used in the essay clear?

The set of questions presented in the rubric guide are set to assist the teacher or the marker in deciding on the mark. The questions aim to explain what each aspect in the rubric covers.

Criterion 2: Language style and Editing

The second criterion [language, style and editing] is presented in Tables 6 and 7 following:

Table 6: *The criteria of language, style and editing/proofreading in Sesotho*

Main aspects of the criterion	Guidelines to the marker						
PUO, SETAELE LE TEKOLOBOTJHA	Kelohloko e sedi ya matla a puo; puo (le ya bonono) le matshwao di sebediswa ka tsela e babatsehang; kgetho ya mantswe e a babatseha; setaele sehalo le rejisetara di loketse sehlooho.	Kelohloko e sedi ya matla a puo; puo le matshwao di sebediswa ka nepo; o sebedisa puo ya bonono; kgetho ya mantswe ke e batsi, ya boiqapelo; setaele sehalo le rejisetara di loketse sehlooho.	Ho na le bopaki ba kelohloko e sedi ya puo; puo le matshwao a puo boholo di nepahetse; mantswe a kgethilweng ke a loketseng tema; setaele sehalo le rejisetara di loketse sehlooho.	O bontsha kelohloko e itseng ya matla a puo; puo ya hae ha e bonolo. Matshwao a puo a lekane; kgetho ya mantswe ke e lekaneng setaele, sehalo le rejisetara di tsamaelana le sehlooho.	Kelohloko e sedi ya puo e a haella; matshwao a puo hangata ha a sebediswa ka nepo; kgetho ya mantswe a motheo feela; setaele, sehalo le rejisetara di hloka momahano.	Puo le tshebediso ya matshwao a puo di fosahetse; kgetho ya mantswe e a haella; setaele, sehalo le rejisetara ha di a nepahala.	Puo le tshebediso ya matshwao a puo di fosahetse haholo; kgetho ya mantswe ha e ya nepahala; setaele, sehalo le rejisetara di fosahetse ka hohlehohle.
Matshwao: 15	Moqoqo boholo ha o na diphoso ka ha o lekotswe botjha ho hlaola diphoso.	Moqoqo boholo ha o na diphoso ka ha o lekotswe botjha ho hlaola diphoso.	Moqoqo boholo ha o na diphoso ka ha o lekotswe botjha ho hlaola diphoso.	Moqoqo o ntse o na le diphoso tse mmalwa le ha o lekotswe botjha ho hlaola diphoso.	Moqoqo o na le diphoso tse ngatanyana le ha o lekotswe botjha ho hlaola diphoso.	Moqoqo o ntse o tletse diphoso tse ngata le ha o lekotswe botjha.	Diphoso di ngatanyana, le pherekano e kgolo le ha na le boiteko ba tekolobotjha.

An English version of the second criterion is presented in Table 7. In this table, the main points in the rubric are highlighted in bold.

Table 7: The criteria of language, style and editing/proofreading in English

Language, style and proof-reading/editing	Critical awareness of impact of language; language (including **figurative language**) and punctuation effectively used; choice of words exceptional; style, tone, register suited to topic.	Critical awareness of impact of language; language and punctuation used correctly; \uses figurative language; choice of words varied and creative; style, tone, register appropriately **suited to topic.**	Critical awareness of impact of language evident; language and punctuation mostly correct; **choice of words** appropriate; Style, tone, register suited to topic.	Some awareness of impact of language; language non-simplistic; **punctuation** adequate; word choice adequate; style, ton, register suited to topic.	Limited **critical awareness of impact of language**; punctuation often inaccurately used; simplistic word choice; style, tone and register incoherent.	Language and punctuation flawed; word choice is limited; **style, tone** and **register** are incorrect.	Language and punctuation are incorrect; word choice: incorrect; style, tone, register completely incorrect.
Marks: 25	Text virtually error-free following proof-reading, editing.	Text largely error-free following proof-reading, editing.	Text mostly error-free following proof-reading, editing.	Text still contains few errors following proofreading, editing.	Text contains several **errors** following proofreading, editing.	The essay contains a lot of errors even though it has been **edited**.	There are a lot of errors and a lot of confusion even though there is an attempt at editing.

According to Hattingh (2009:09), since 2008, Grade 12 learners who write English First Additional language examinations are expected to "produce cohesive and coherent writing, *using appropriate content, style and register* [emphasis added] within a specific context, while fulfilling a function such as arguing or describing." The same applies to learners who write essays in Sesotho as a Home Language in the Further Education and Training phase. According to the National Curriculum Standards Assessment Standards (DBE, 2005:33), learners should be in a position to decide on the appropriate style and point of view. Furthermore, they need to be well informed in terms of the text format. These aspects are then assessed as learners' essays are marked. In other words, this means that when the learner chooses a topic, he/she has to decide which style is most appropriate for it, create content that would enrich the topic, decide on the register and follow the most appropriate format that is most suitable to the topic. For instance, the learner should not write an argumentative essay as though it is a discursive essay. He/she has to know the requirements of the essay type. Further discussion of this criterion guide is presented following the presentation of the guide in Tables 8 and 9 following:

Table 8: *The rubric guide for the criterion of language, style and editing/proofreading in Sesotho*

Dintlha tsa sehlooho tsa makgetha	Ditataiso ho motshwayi
Puo	Ekaba puo e sebedisitswe ka nepo ntlheng ya mopeleto, karohanyo ya mantswe and mokgwa wa ho ngola?
Matshwao a puo	Ebe matshwao a puo a sebedisitswe ka nepo? Ebe matswe a ngotswe ka nepo ntlheng ya ditlhaku?
Setaele	Ebe kgetho ya setaele sa semmuso le se iketlileng dikgethuwe ka nepo bakeng sa sehlooho? Ebe moithuti o sebedisa setaele se tshwanang moqoqo kaofela?
Registara	Ebe kgetho ya mantswe le sebopeho-puo di nepahetse bakeng sa moelelo wa taba? Ebe kgetho ya mantswe le sebopeho-puo di maeong a lebelletsweng bakeng sa sehlooho se kgethuweng?
Tone	Ebe o kgona ho elellwa sehalo sa moqoqo? Ebe o phetha merero ya moqoqo, mohlala, o etsa o lle, o nyakalle, e fetola maikutlo a hao?
Tekolobotjha	Ana diphoso di ntse di le ngata le ka morao ho ho halola diphoso? Ana moithuti o kgona ho hlaola diphoso tse hlwailweng ho mokwaitso wa pele?

An English version of the rubric guide for the second criterion is presented in Table 9 following:

Table 9*: The rubric explanation guide for the criterion of language, style and editing/proofreading in English*

Main aspects of the criterion	Guiding questions for the marker
Language	Is the language used correctly in terms of spelling, word breaks and orthography?
Punctuation	Are punctuation signs used correctly? Are words correctly capitalised?
Style	Is the choice of either formal or informal style appropriate for the topic? Is the learner consistent in his/her use of style?
Register	Are the word choices and the grammar appropriate for the context? Are the word choices and grammar at the level that can be expected for the chosen topic?
Tone	Can you feel the mood of the essay? Does it achieve the goal of the essay, for instance, making you cry, happy, or changing your moods?
Editing/ Proofreading	Are there too many errors following editing or proofreading? Is the learner able to correct the errors indicated on the pre-submission draft?

The rubric criterion on language, style and editing/proofreading brings attention to the issue of the awareness of impact of language. Unfortunately, the rubric does not explain what language means in the context of this criterion. As such, this aspect is unclear. However, further elaboration in the rubric informs that the focus is on the type of language used by the writer in terms of simplicity, complexity and appropriateness. Complexity would then incorporate the issue of using figurative language to achieve the desired effect.

As stated in the correction code, teachers use the code: "p", to indicate inappropriate language choices in general. These may include but are not restricted to incorrect word choices, incorrect register, incorrect style and unconventional language uses. This is to some extent confusing. Even so, the aspects of style, register and language are separated in the rubric guide. First, the language is restricted to the aspect of correctness in terms of spelling, conventional language use in terms of sentence construction, orthography and word breaks. The aspect of word division is mentioned together with that of orthography because word division and combination are a prevalent issue in learners' writing (Sibeko, 2016:109-10). Collectively, a total of 98% of feedback provided on final learner essay drafts in Sesotho are focused on matters of orthography and word divisions (*Ibid*). Although orthography encompasses all systems

of writing [for example, spelling, conjuctivity, disjuctivity and word division], in this rubric, it is used only to cover the aspect of official spelling.

According to Chitja (2006:03), the international standards of Sesotho orthography are guided by those of Sesotho from South Africa and Sesotho from Lesotho. As a result, the discussion of orthographies of Sesotho is restricted to those of Lesotho and South Africa even though they are not the only countries with speakers of the language. Sekere (2004:30) contends that Sesotho home language speakers from Lesotho differ from that of South Africa mainly because of their choices in vocabulary rather than syntax, but there are some observable differences in syntax. Although the orthography of Sesotho was developed based on the Kwena dialect (Sekere, 2004:35), the orthographies of Lesotho and South African Sesotho have come to develop and differ from each other. Generally, there are few key differences between the two orthographies, for instance, the use of "*l*" in Lesotho in place of "*d*" in some South African Sesotho words (ALS, 2014; SAHO, 2012). For instance, when writing "*leleme*" which translates to either 'language' or 'tongue,' both orthographies would use the same letters. Comparably, when writing 'sound' in Sesotho, the orthography from Lesotho would use "*molumo,*" while the orthography from South Africa would use "*modumo*". Although there was no observed instance of the confusion of "*l*" and "*d*" in the scripts submitted by teachers in the said research, if a learner were to use the incorrect version of the orthography, the teacher or marker would indicate that the orthography is incorrect by using the code "mn."

The aspect of spelling would then cover all instances where the learner uses spelling that is not recognized by the teacher. The teacher would then assume that the learner does not know the correct spelling of the word and flag it as misspelling. Unfortunately, even though many words used in Sesotho are loaned from other languages, the guidance for naturalisation and orthography of loan words is not fully clear. Therefore, when borrowing or importing words, learners can use the spelling they see fit, and depending on the teacher, the learners might be marked right or wrong. For instance, a well-known word that is used from day to day, i.e. 'computer,' is not standardised in terms of Sesotho orthography. For instance, Oliver (2009) provides four different spellings in Sesotho which are; *khompiuta*, *khompiutara*, and *khomputa* and *khomputara* which are also used in Chitja (2006:229). There are no rules governing which spelling is correct and which one is not. The teacher or marker would then use his/her own discretion to decide whether the learner got the spelling correct or not. This is the most prevalent problem with the spelling aspect of orthography. The teacher would then need to focus on the issue of consistency in spelling if there is no definite spelling for the word used.

In addition to orthography issues induced by loaned words, other issues include the aspect of word choices. Choosing words becomes difficult as Chitja (2006:03) states that 50% of Sesotho words are not used. Although it would be extremely difficult to decide how much 50% of words in a language is, we can surely ascertain that many words are not used in everyday conversations. Chitja (2006:03) justifies the assertion that many words are not used based on reasons such as the fact that some of the Sesotho words are not yet transcribed into writing and are only observed in oral

language. Even though many Sesotho words are not yet transcribed into written form, it must be acknowledged that a lot of spoken Sesotho words have been transcribed into written form in a very short period of time. According to Doke (1935:185), in the 1930s the orthography of Sesotho was untouched [which means that writing in Sesotho was not yet standardised], while other African Languages such as IsiZulu and Sepedi were already being written. Since the orthography is not standardized and many words are not used regularly, the issue that arises is that of the choice between translating and borrowing. For instance, when referring to a computer mouse, the learner would have two choices. According to Oliver (2009), a computer mouse translates to "*mause*" in Sesotho, which is a naturalised loaned word from the English 'mouse.' On the other hand, Chitja (2006:792) lists it as "*twejana*" which means; "little mouse". If the learner chooses the loan word "*mause*", the teacher might conclude that the learner was too lazy to translate the word and opted for borrowing. Also, if the learner uses the little mouse translation, he/she may be marked incorrect for opting for a literal translation. As such, it can be deduced that the issue of word choices is not as clear cut as might be preferred and perceived to be. Here too, the teacher would have to rely on own personal discretion and rather mark for consistency of the spelling.

Even so, it cannot be overlooked that the correctness and appropriateness of some word choices is very easy to detect. For instance, one participant in Sibeko (2016:122) states that the learner should use words that are relevant to the topic and the context. She explains that the learner should not use humorous words when addressing sad topics. Another instance is the use of contractions, termed "*tlohelo*" in Sesotho. Here, the writer will leave out some letters (usually the prefix) when writing, [mostly in the plural] and some letters when combining words. For instance, in the context of leaving out prefixes, the writer would write: "*eta tsa ka*," which would mean 'shoes of mine' translated to 'my shoes'. The concord "*tsa*" is an indication that the shoe is in the plural. This would be informal language similar to the issue of contractions such as; would've, haven't, weren't and etc. in English writing. In the context of combining words, the learner would for instance combine words such as; "their mother" which in formal language would be written as: "*mme wa bona*" to be informal and write it out as: "*mmabona*." If the text is supposed to be in the formal style and register, then the learner would have to lose marks for instances of informal language. Here, the distinction between appropriate and inappropriate word choices would be clear. The word choices would then affect the aspect of style. In the guide, teachers are encouraged to simply assess learners' ability to choose the correct writing style as required by the type of essay and to assess whether the learners are consistent in their choice of style or if there are lapses.

Furthermore, in the second criterion we find a reference to punctuation. To guide teachers, punctuation is simplified to the basics of examining whether the punctuation signs are correctly used and if the words are correctly capitalised.

The rubric explanation guide restricts register to the aspect of suitability to the chosen topic and the word choices made by the learner. For instance, the learner may use a correct word in the wrong context, such as '*o shwele*' which would mean 'he/she died'

instead of the more acceptable '*o hlokahetse'* which means 'he/she has passed on.' In Sesotho, unless the writer intends to offend, the use of the word 'died', i.e. '*o shwele*' when referring to a person or people is inappropriate and rude.

The tone of the essay is restricted to the mood of the essay. The word choices, which determine the register of the essay and the style of the essay help the writer paint a picture in words. The success of the essay would then be the ability of the essay to paint a vivid picture for the reader, thereby creating the desired effect in the reader. For instance, if the writer chooses to say a person 'is dead' instead of 'has passed on', then the effect of sympathy will not be achieved because a person who died would be a person who deserved to lose his/her life.

To avoid issues of repetition, although the rubric mentions sentence writing/construction in this criterion, it is left out because it re-appears in the criterion of structure which is in the following discussion.

Criterion 3: Structure, paragraphs, introduction, conclusion and length

The third criterion on the rubric focuses on the aspect of structure. The description in the rubric is presented in Tables 10 and 11. In this criterion, paragraphs, sentences, cohesion, introductions, conclusions and the length are marked.

Table 10: *The criterion of structure, paragraphs, introduction, conclusion and length in Sesotho*

Sebopeho, diratswana, selelekela le qetelo; bolelele						
Diratswana di a babatseha, di hokahane, ka tsela e hlakileng ka dinako tsohle.	Diratswana di ntle haholo, di hokahane ka tsela a hlakileng boholo ba nako.	Diratswana di bopilwe ka kgokahano ka tsela e kgotsofatsang.	Diratswana di ntle, di hokahaneng ka tsela e utlwahalang.	Diratswana le dipolelo di na le diphoso, empa moeleleo o ntse o le teng.	Diratswana le dipolelo tsa motheo feela.	Mongolo o molokoloko (ha ho diratswana) kapa diratswana di a haella haholo.
Selelekela le qetelo di a babatseha haholo, di dumellana le mosebetsi.	Selelekela le qetelo di ntle haholo, di dumellana le mosebetsi.	Selelekela le qetelo di a kgahlisa haholo, di dumellana le mosebetsi.	Selelekela le qetelo di a kgotsofatsa, ho latela ditlhoko tsa mosebetsi.	Selelekela le qetelo di di batla di kgotsofatsa, ho latela mosebetsi.	Selelekela le qetelo tse bonolo feela.	Selelekela le qetelo di haella le ho fokola haholo.
Bolelele bo nepahetse, ho latela ditlhoko tsa sehlooho.	Bolele bo nepahetse	Bolele bo nepahetse	Bolelele bo nepahetse.	Bolelele bo batla bo nepahetse.	O batla o le molele kapa mokgutshwane haholo.	O molele/ mokgutshwane haholo.

Matshwao: 5

An English version of the criterion of structure is presented in Table 11. In this version, the aspects marked in the criterion are highlighted in bold.

Table 11: The criterion of structure, paragraphs, introduction, conclusion and length in English

Structure, paragraphs; introduction and conclusion; length — Marks: 5							
Paragraphs brilliantly constructed, consistent and clear at all times	**Paragraphs** brilliantly constructed, consistent and clear most of the time.	Sentences, paragraphs well-constructed.	Paragraphs adequate; might be faulty but still makes sense	Sentences, paragraphing might be faulty in places.	**Sentences**, paragraphs constructed at an elementary level.	Sentences, paragraphs Muddled (no paragraphs), or inconsistent.
Introduction and conclusion perfect, suited to topic.	**Introduction** and conclusion very good, suited to topic.	Introduction and conclusion good, suited to topic.	Introduction and **conclusion** satisfactory, suited to topic.	The introduction and the conclusion are almost satisfactory, **suited to topic.**	The introduction and the conclusion are simplistic.	The introduction and the conclusion are insufficient and very weak.
Length in accordance with requirements of topic.	The length is correct	**The length is correct**	The length is correct	The length is almost correct	The essay is a bit too long or too short	The essay is too short or too long

This criterion is the most cluttered one in the rubric. In spite of that, it does not count for much marks. It accounts for 10% of the overall mark. The rubric explanation guide to the criterion of structure is presented in Tables 12 and 13. The macro structure of the essay pertains to the way in which the essay is written in terms of paragraphing and content development. This covers analysing the essay for the introduction paragraph and the content paragraphs together with the concluding paragraph. Also, this extends to cover the length of the essay. Participants reported acceptable paragraph length as between five and seven lines Sibeko (2016:129). Furthermore, they reported constraining the introductory paragraph to six lines. The rubric does not specify anything about length restrictions except querying whether it is acceptable or not. Based on the participating teachers' suggestions, the rubric guide prescribes six to seven lines for paragraphs.

In terms of introductions and conclusions, participating teachers contended that it is important to ensure that there is a link between the essay introduction and conclusion. They argue that introductions are supposed to trigger interest to read further and to clearly introduce the topic. Furthermore, they list solutions, lessons, advice, relevance to the topic and clarity that the essay is ending, as very important aspects of the creative essay conclusion. As a result, the rubric guide queries whether the introduction and the conclusion meet these expectations.

Table 12: *The rubric explanation guide for the aspect of structure in Sesotho*

Dintlha tsa sehlooho tsa makgetha	Ditataiso ho motshwayi
Sebopeho	Ebe moqoqo wa moithuti o na le selelekela, mmele le phethelo?
Diratswana	Ebe moqoqo o arotswe ka diratswana tsa mela e tsheletseng ho ya ho e supileng? Ebe diratswana le dipolelo di ngotswe hantle ka nepo? Ebe di sitisa ho lelemela ha moqoqo? Ebe ho thata ho utlwisisa molaetsa o bolelwang ke moqoqo? O a kgona ho fapanya pakeng tsa dikarolo tse fapaneng tsa moqoqo (selelekela, mmele, phethelo)?
Selelekela	Ebe selelekela se etsa hore o batle ho bala ho ya pele? Ebe selelekela se lelekella moqoqo? Ebe o kgona ho bolela hore ho tla sekasekwa eng moqoqong ka ho bala selelekela? Ekaba sehlooho se hlalositswe kapa selelekela se supa hore mongodi o utlwisisa sehlooho? Ebe puo o sebedisitswe ka nepo ho tlisa kgahleho ya ho tswella pele ka ho bala moqoqo?

Phethelo/ Maphetho	Ebe phethelo e tsamaisana le selelekela le sehlooho sa moqoqo? Ebe tharollo, thuto kapa keletso e/diteng? Haeba di le teng, e be di thusa sehlooho? Ebe ho totobetse hore moqoqo o ya phethwa/emisa/fella?
Bolelele ba moqoqo	Ebe bolelele ba moqoqo bo latela dipehelo tsa ditaelo? Haeba moqoqo o le motelele ho feta tekano, hangata motshwayi o emisa ho fana ka ditshwaelo moo moqoqo o fetang matswe a balletsweng. Haeba o le kgutshwane haholo, motshwayi ha a hafole matshwao. Empa, ka dinako tsa ho ngola mesebetsi ya semmuso, mathata ana ha a ke a tholahale ka ha titjhere a netefatsa tswelopele ya baithuti, mme o ba maemong a ho ba eletsa hore ba eketse meqoqo kapa ba e nyenyefatse mokgwaritsong wa ho qetela.

The English version of the rubric guide presented in Table 12 is presented in Table 13 following:

Table 13: *The rubric explanation guide for the aspect of structure in English*

Main aspects of the criterion	Guidelines for the marker
Structure	Does the learner's essay contain an introduction, body and conclusion
Paragraphing	Is the essay divided into paragraphs of about five to seven lines? Are the paragraphs and sentences well-constructed? Do they hinder the flow of the essay? Is it hard to understand what is communicated by the essay? Can you distinguish between essay parts (introduction, body and conclusion)?
Introduction	Does the introduction make you want to read further? Does it introduce the discussion? • Can you tell what will be discussed in the essay from reading the introduction? Is the topic explained or does the topic indicate that the writer understands the topic? Is language appropriately used to spark your interest to read further?
Conclusion	Does the conclusion link to the introduction and the topic of the essay? Is there a solution, lesson or advice? If yes, is it relevant to the topic? Is it clear that the essay is ending?
Length of the essay	Is the length of the essay in adherence with the instructions? • If it is too long, generally, the teacher stops providing feedback at the cut off for the maximum number of words. • If it is too short, the teacher does not penalise the learner. However, during formative formal tasks, this problem is usually not encountered as the teacher monitors learners' progress and is in position to advice the learner to extend the length of the final draft.

According to the DBE (2008a:04), in the process of writing, language skills are not necessarily expected to be addressed [by both teachers and learners] during each step of the process. However, in practice, teachers more often than not, encounter only the final draft of the essay and are therefore not in a position to focus on different aspects at different stages of writing. For instance, they cannot say that they address creativity in terms of ideas in the first draft and language in the second draft if they only get to see the final draft. This means that the responsibility of mastering the Learning Outcome 3 [LO 3] as stipulated by the DBE, lies on the learner.

The aim of writing in the Further Education and Training level is "to ensure that the learner is able to write and present for a wide range of purposes and audiences using conventions and formats appropriate to diverse contexts" (Clift, 2007:04; DBE, 2008b:15; Van der Walt, 2010:326). As such, each context has its own format that should be adhered to. This would then mean that different essay types are assessed with focus on different essay aspects. Consequently, the criterion of structure which covers introductions and conclusions is subjected to the type of essay chosen by the learner. This is indicated in the rubric explanation guide by the different listed ways of ending and/or starting an essay. The memorandum of the question paper will indicate which aspects are most important for each essay question and teachers can focus on those aspects instead of generalising.

The length of the essay does not count much towards the grading process. While some learners struggle to make a point and end up using too many words in an essay, some learners go straight to the point. As such, the actual ability to make a point is the focus of the marking and is the one that is worthy of being considered important. Regardless of the length, the teacher is expected to mark the whole essay and not impose any further penalties if the essay does not correspond to stipulated lengths.

6.   Conclusion

This paper presented the first bilingual English and Sesotho rubric explanation guide for the rubric used to assess Sesotho grade 10 home language creative writing essays. It is acknowledged that not all teachers use the same rubric; however, Sesotho creative writing essay rubrics supplied by the DBE are somewhat similar. Consequently, this rubric guide can be used by teachers to understand rubric criteria instead of being specific to the rubric presented in this article. It can prove beneficial for both novice and expert teachers.

Sibeko (2016:189) concludes that marking Sesotho essays is no different from marking other languages and Van der Walt's (2010:235) contends that vernacular home language curriculums are based on the generic English first additional language curriculum in South Africa. This serves as basis for the recommendation that the same procedure followed in the provision of a rubric guide for the marking of Sesotho home language creative writing essays be extended to other languages [home, first and second additional languages].

Future studies may benefit from analysing raw data on the whole of the creative writing paper instead of just a section of it as was the limitation of this paper. This paper focused only on the essay and not transactional texts. Also, a comparison of learner performance for each of the criterion may prove worthwhile. Furthermore, more research into the effect of workshops on marking should be investigated as not much is known about their effects in the standardisation of marks (O'Sullivan, 2006:186).

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(Footnotes)

1   Home Language (HL)

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