



Development and Use of an Oral Language Assessment Tool

❖ What you need to know

Through interactions with others, children learn new words, and use language to do many things, such as develop relationships, make requests, provide information, and express their needs or desires. They learn about the world and about cultural expectations for interacting with particular people in particular contexts. Classroom assessments of children's language should provide space for children to show what they can do with language.

❖ Why this research is important

Teachers need tools and approaches for assessing children's oral language in everyday use.

❖ How this research was conducted

With ongoing teacher input over a school year, we developed a classroom oral language assessment tool through categorizing the social purposes of children's language in 81 videos of children's play interactions in kindergarten and grade one. Participating northern rural teachers then incorporated this assessment tool into their classroom practices. In interviews, they described the kinds of information the tool provided and how they used the information, as well as the contexts and lengths of time they used the tool over a six-week period.

❖ What the researcher found

Teachers used the tool in play and small-group settings. In addition to coming to know students in new ways, teachers used the tool to assess the value of their classroom activities and revise their teaching practices. Their observations were informative to colleagues, especially speech-language pathologists, and to parents, offering contextual examples of a student's language competencies as well as areas to develop.

❖ How this research can be used

Teachers can use the oral language assessment tool to identify children's language strengths and needs. It provides specific information to inform their teaching, and for reporting to parents and speech-language pathologists.

Keywords: language assessment, assessment tools, assessment in play

Publications based on the research

- Peterson, S.S. (2016). Developing a play-based communication assessment through collaborative action research with teachers in northern Canadian Indigenous communities. *Literacy*, 51(1), 36-43.
- Peterson, S.S. (2016). Research in Canada's northern rural and Indigenous communities: Supporting young children's oral language and writing. *The Reading Teacher*, 70(3), 383-387.
- Portier, C., & Peterson, S.S. (2017). Rural northern Canadian teachers' discoveries about young children's oral language. *Language and Literacy*, 19(2), 109-126.