

Section B

Guidelines for Administering the Sampling Tasks and Profile

1. PREPARING TO USE THE ORAL LANGUAGE PROFILE

Before making the decision to use the Oral Language Profile, it is necessary to engage in some clarification at a conceptual and organisational level to ensure the purpose of the assessment is well understood and the implementation of the assessment occurs in a strategic and effective way.

Decision-making steps in oral language profiling:

Why

Is the profiling being undertaken to:

- ascertain the Standard Australian English language skills and needs for language development of the whole class;
- identify children at risk for language and learning difficulties;
- provide further information about areas of language development the teacher wishes to include in the language program; or
- provide a basis for reporting to parents and school administration?

What

Is the primary focus of the profiling:

- students' social interaction and communication skills;
- students' development of Standard Australian English linguistic skills such as vocabulary and grammar; or
- students' ability to use "literate" language and organise information using Standard Australian English structures in stories, descriptions, explanations, etc?

How

Do the tasks provide adequate information in relation to the areas the teacher wishes to examine?

Do they need to be supplemented by teacher observation or data collection in specific classroom contexts?

What kinds of informal monitoring will occur following the use of the tasks?

Will this observation be undertaken at an individual or group level?

Who will be responsible for collecting and analysing the oral language data?

How will the data be collated and used at a whole school level?

Who

What resources are available and who will receive priority?

Will the Standard Australian English skills of all K-3 students be assessed; only those students who may be considered at risk; or a small sample of low, medium and high academically achieving children in each group for comparison purposes?

When

During which school term will the sampling and profiling be conducted?

Will this involve children from all year levels during the same time period?

Will profiling take place once or twice a year?

2. ADMINISTERING THE ORAL LANGUAGE SAMPLING TASKS

The *Oral Language Sampling* tasks are administered on a one to one basis with each student. The task takes approximately 10 minutes to administer but may require longer for the shy, anxious or reluctant child.

Organisational requirements

Materials Tape recorder, question script and data sheets, narrative stimulus pictures. The stimulus pictures, question script and data sheets are contained in Appendix 8.

Location A quiet, distraction-free location is required with low background noise to enable you to sustain the student's attention and obtain a good quality audio sample. You and the student should sit side-by-side with the narrative stimulus materials between you to encourage shared focus.

Personnel The tasks should be administered by trained personnel such as a teacher or teacher assistant. It is important that the assessment session is conducted by someone familiar to the child. The student's classroom teacher should be involved in at least some of the data collection so an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the developmental dimensions of the profile and student's performance on the sampling task is developed. Other adults can be trained to assist with the transcription of the data.


Before administering the tasks, it is recommended that the teacher introduce the tape recorder during normal classroom activities to make children familiar and comfortable with it. Allowing time during classroom activities to play back the tape may also reduce the number of requests from children to hear their narrative replayed during the assessment session, thus reducing administration time.

Preparing students for participation in the sampling session

It is important that students undertaking the sampling tasks are relaxed and able to offer their best possible responses during the assessment session. The tasks should be administered while maintaining a supportive, responsive interaction with the child. Avoid creating the atmosphere of a formal test.

Some children, particularly those who are anxious or reluctant, may require a few minutes of conversational interaction at the beginning of the session to provide reassurance and encourage verbal interaction. Most children, however, are likely to demonstrate an interest in the story materials and will be able to start the task immediately. Occasionally, the task may need to be abandoned if the child is highly anxious and re-administered at another time by an adult with whom the child is comfortable.

With pre-primary children it is advisable to allow at least one term settling-in time before the tasks are attempted.

 Aboriginal children, and children from other cultural groups, may be likely to use *home language* varieties. The person administering the task should strongly encourage the use of Standard Australian English and acknowledge the value of the home language. There is an expectation that all cultural groups will acquire the Standard Australian English skills needed for the economic and global workplace and to achieve the National literacy benchmarks. This does not mean the devaluing of a child's home language but a parallel development of Standard Australian English skills.

Guidelines for taping data

Following these guidelines will lead to efficient recording and collation of data. It will help to minimise the amount of time needed for the assessment of large numbers of children.

Recording onto a cassette tape

- Ensure that the tape is labelled clearly with a number.
- Colour code the tape for the year level of the children who are to be assessed.
- Record the name of the teacher and the year level of the class being assessed on the tape cover insert.
- Test that the tape recorder is working correctly – say a few words, then play back.
- Ensure that the tape counter is at 0000. The counter should be returned to 0000 when recording begins on a new side.
- Record the tape counter number for the beginning of each child's recording on the assessment form.
- Place the tape recorder as close to the child as possible, making sure that the microphone is toward the child.
- Ensure that the tape is wound on to the end of the previous recording before recording the next child's sample.

After taping

- Record the name of the child and the 'start' number on the tape cover insert.
- Retain all tapes for long term monitoring and verification.

Guidelines for administering the oral comprehension task

Take time at this point to familiarise yourself with the picture sequences and question scripts contained in Appendix 8.

1. The teacher may need to vary the task introduction slightly in order to take account of specific needs some children may have for additional explanation or reassurance.

Suggested instruction:

I have got some pictures for you to look at. In a minute we're going to use these pictures to make a story. But first we need to look at the pictures and talk about them so we can work out what the story is going to be.

2. Follow the question script, including both the questions that appear in italics and those that appear in normal print. The questions shown in italics are not included in the profiling of the Oral Comprehension task but should be administered in order to provide a content scaffold for the Narrative Production task that follows.
3. The student's responses can be written down directly or tape recorded and transcribed later. If writing responses down, it is advisable to explain this to the student, *eg I'm going to write down what you say so that I can look at it later on.* It is recommended to use the tape recorder if the student provides very long, elaborate responses, or if the loss of social contact with the student while writing down responses is likely to interfere with performance.

Transcription lines are provided on the data sheet for writing down the student's answers. The responses to the questions that are in italics do not need to be written down. However, for some students it may be useful to maintain a record of the responses to all questions.

4. Repeat the question only if you judge that the child has not paid enough attention to the question and is able to provide a more appropriate response. Record both the first and second responses the child makes and indicate that you have repeated the question by recording (*rep*) between the two responses. If you judge an inappropriate response reflects genuine difficulty in comprehension, do not repeat the question.

If the child has a pattern of *don't know* or non-responses, encourage them to attempt a response (*eg Mm, well what do you think?*). These types of responses are very frequent in young children, and are often easily overcome by communicating in a supportive way an expectation that the student is capable of providing a response.

5. If the student is not able to provide a response or gives an inappropriate answer, model a possible response and move on to the next question. Examples of modelling statements are included in the question scripts (see Appendices).

The sequences of pictures used to tell a story may be unfamiliar to some children. If you judge this to be the case, postpone using the sampling tasks until there has been opportunity to familiarise the child with this type of material, eg in shared book sessions.

Guidelines for administering the narrative production task

1. As with the Narrative Comprehension task, the introduction to the Narrative Production task can be tailored to the needs of individual children at the teacher's discretion.

Suggested instruction:

O.K. We've had a look at the pictures. Now I want you to tell me a story about the pictures. We'll go back to the beginning and you can use the pictures to help you. I'm going to turn on the tape recorder so we can listen to your story again later.

2. The purpose of the narrative production task is to assess baseline, unassisted performance, so you should provide as little prompting as possible during the story narration. Prompt only if the student is very reluctant to begin or if he/she is unable to continue the story without assistance. Do not prompt the student in order to gain more specific story details or to encourage elaboration.

If prompting is required, use the following hierarchy of prompts

- (i) General encouragement, *eg Mmmm yes ...?*
 - (ii) Non-specific question, *eg What happened then?*
 - (iii) Specific question, *eg What's the boy doing?*
Where is the kite?
 - (iv) Forced alternative, *eg Did the father or the dog get the kite?*
 - (v) Direct model, *eg The dog got the kite back didn't he.*
What happened then?
3. Allow the child to proceed at his/her own pace through the story and take responsibility for turning the page. If necessary direct his/her attention to the appropriate part of the story by indicating when it is appropriate to go on to the next page, ie *When you're ready you turn the page ...*
 4. Do not write down the story as the student is speaking. Tape recording the story will result in more accurate data collection. Students will be encouraged to make their best attempt if they have your undivided attention.
 5. If the student uses a very soft voice or has slightly unclear speech, repeat each utterance made during the story retelling, to prevent later difficulties when transcribing the tape. This can be done in a conversational tone of voice that does not appear unusual to the student.



The administration of both Oral Language Sampling tasks is demonstrated in the second section of the videotape which accompanies this instructional package. You should view this section of the videotape now.

3. TRANSCRIBING THE DATA

1. Transcribe everything the student says including hesitations, eg *um ...* and restarts, eg *he went ... no, I mean she went ...*. If there is a long silence or series of fillers abbreviate in the transcript, eg *um ... um ... etc.*
2. Verbal utterances often do not equate in structure to a written sentence. Transcribe the student's own syntax. Do not attempt to regularise the utterances so they conform to the rules of written language and do not "fill in" or correct syntactic errors, eg *him doned the wrong thing*. In addition, do not use punctuation such as capital letters (except for names), full stops, commas, question marks and so on.
3. Use a continuous transcript across the line, separating each utterance with a semi-colon (;) or a diagonal (/). Use the speaker's intonation and pauses to suggest where the utterance boundary occurs. Sometimes you will need to make a "best guess", eg *then the cat climbed up the tree; and the dog ...; and the dog didn't know where he was and he looked and he couldn't find him; and then he was sad.*
4. Include a verbatim transcription of any prompts that you used during the story narration. After the story sample is transcribed, mark your prompts with a highlighter pen to give a quick visual record of the amount of support required by the student.
5. Transcribe articulation errors in order to obtain information about the child's ability to produce sounds. Write down the word the student said, eg "dirl". Include, in brackets, the word the student was attempting to say ("girl").
6. Note any instance of the child using her/his voice to emphasise or entertain.
7. If a word or utterance is unintelligible use "x" for each unintelligible syllable, eg "xx" would denote an unintelligible two syllable word; "xx x" would denote an unintelligible two word utterance.



4. ANALYSING THE DATA AND COMPLETING THE ORAL LANGUAGE PROFILE

Oral language samples are a complex type of qualitative data which requires an independent level of interpretation and judgement. The following guidelines will assist teachers to problem-solve potential difficulties that may arise in analysing the task data and completing the Oral Language Profile, but it is valid and, at times, necessary for teachers to exercise professional judgement and take into account their knowledge of the student in making an evaluation of task performance. If possible a subset of data should be profiled jointly or crosschecked by two or more teachers in order to ensure the data collected from different class groups is analysed in a consistent manner.

The Oral Language Profile contains four sections:

- Social Communication (SC);
- Comprehension (C);
- Content and Organisation (CO); and
- Linguistic Structures (LS).

Each section contains a number of indicators. Three levels – Emergent, Early Developing and Developing have been identified for each indicator.

For example:

Emergent

CO1 Does not initiate topics independently.

Early Developing

CO1 Talk is mostly associated with the "here and now" or familiar topics related to personal experience.

Developing

CO1 Presents information on known topic to the class (eg report, description) including world as well as personal knowledge.

Student performance is recorded by placing a mark on the profiling bar to indicate the level of functioning. If the skill is consistently demonstrated, place the mark within the appropriate phase. If there is evidence of the skill, but this is not consistent, assign a transitional level by placing the mark between the phases.


Profiling bars on the Oral Language Profile have been shaded for ease of use.

Complete these indicators using data from the two sampling tasks.

These indicators may also be completed using data from the two sampling tasks. However, if the tasks do not provide enough information to allow for a judgement to be made, they should be completed using teacher knowledge of the student.

Complete these indicators using general classroom observations and knowledge of the student.

The Oral Language Profile may be entirely completed using observation and teacher knowledge of the student. However, it is sometimes difficult to obtain specific, reliable information quickly. This is particularly true for children who infrequently bid for a turn in classroom speaking contexts.

 A study was carried out in the Perth metropolitan area to compare teacher rating of the child's oral language skills with rating following use of the sampling activities. The results indicated that, for most children from Anglo-Celtic backgrounds, the teacher profiling matched that obtained using the sampling activities. For Aboriginal children, however, there was a strong tendency for performance using the sampling activities to be profiled at a higher level than assigned by teachers. Although further investigation of this trend is needed, it is recommended at this time that profiling of the skills of Aboriginal children should be carried out using the sampling activities.

Analysing the data from the oral comprehension task

1. Complete ratings for the student's responses in the Oral Comprehension task in the box shown next to each question. The answer should be assigned an Emergent level (1), an Early Developing level (2) or a Developing level (3).

The profiling guidelines are outlined in the Appendix section. Appendix 1 consists of a set of general criteria that can be applied to all questions. Appendices 2 & 3 give examples of responses to each of the questions in the Kite Story (Appendix 2) and the Lost Teddy Story (Appendix 3) to further facilitate the profiling task.

2. If the answer is ambiguous or it is difficult to assign a level, the student's performance across the task may serve as a guide to the rating for a particular question. If this scan of the data does not assist the profiling of a particular answer, assign the lowest of the two levels under consideration.
3. Record the number of questions assigned Phase 1, 2 or 3 rating in the first table at the end of the data sheet.
4. Assign the student an overall level in the statement at the end of the data sheet. If the majority of answers occur at a particular level, ie Phase 1, 2 or 3, assign this as the overall level of performance on the task. If answers are relatively evenly distributed over the two levels assign a transition level of performance eg Phase 1-2. If the answers are distributed in an inconsistent pattern across Phase 1, 2 and 3, assign Phase 2.
5. Transfer the student's assigned level onto point C4 of the Oral Language Profile.

Emergent

C4 May respond appropriately to concrete, literal questions, but experiences difficulty making predictions and inferences.

Early Developing

C4 Responses to questions are relevant and demonstrate the ability to make simple predictions and inferences directly based on information presented.

Developing

C4 Draws on general world knowledge to interpret information, going beyond presented information to make own predictions and inferences.




Profiling Baydon's sample

Follow the steps outlined on page 13 to analyse the responses given by Baydon in the Oral Comprehension task. The general guidelines for profiling, also contained in Appendix 1, are reproduced here to help you with this task. The examples of responses to the Kite Story (Appendix 2, page 45) will provide extra help if needed. The Kite Story picture sequence can be found on pages 60-63.

Phase 1 Student demonstrates little comprehension of question. No response or irrelevant response given; or

The question is understood but a limited or inappropriate answer is provided. The student may include in their response some information which is perceived to be unrelated or irrelevant.

 You should judge whether or not a given response is appropriate in light of the child's probable experience with the situation under discussion, and the language code the child is using.

If you have reason to suspect that the situation is unfamiliar, results gained from administration of this task should be interpreted cautiously as they may underestimate the child's ability.

Phase 2 The student is able to make inferences and substantiate them through appropriate explanation, but reasoning is highly bound by the information provided in the picture.

Phase 3 The student draws on a more sophisticated level of world knowledge to interpret events. Responses incorporate more explanation and elaboration as if the student is "filling in" a context.

ORAL COMPREHENSION TASK

"KITE" STORY

STUDENT **Baydon** Date of birth

Class / teacher Tape no. / side / counter no.

Date of recording Recorded by

Comments: (eg first language, attention to task, behaviour)

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTION

I've got some pictures for you to look at. We're going to use these pictures to make a story in a minute. But first we need to look at the pictures and talk about them so we can work out what the story is going to be.

Questions shown in italics are not included in the profiling of the Oral Comprehension Task, but should still be administered in order to prepare the child for the Narrative Production task which follows. Use the script in parentheses if the child fails to make the key inference in the preceding question.

Picture One

1. Who are these people? ...um ...a brother and a grandma and dad and a sister and a brother and a girl and a dog.....

Do you think they could be a family?

(Which one do you think would be the mum? Who's that etc)....

What are they doing? (They look like they're having a picnic, don't they?)

2. Why aren't the kids at school? ... because it might be the holidays or a weekend.....

3. Whose idea was the picnic? Why? ... probably the mum and dads (P: why?) because it might have been a sunny day so they thought let's have a picnic.....

4. Where are they? ... they're probably in the hills where the rivers are.....

What's the boy doing? (It looks like he's playing with the kite).

5. What do you think is going to happen in the next picture? Why? ... it's probably really windy and then it might blow into the water.....

Picture Two

What has happened? (Oh no, the kite's gone in the water).

6. Why can't the dad get it out? ... because he can't reach across the other side.....

7. What is the mum saying to the boy? ... she's probably saying it'll be alright ..

8. Why aren't the others doing anything? ... because they probably ... they probably can't reach across the other side.....

9. What are some other things they could try? ... they could probably jump across the river and get it because it's near the other sand and grass.....

Picture Three

What's happening now? (Mm, the dog's getting the kite).

How could the dog get the kite back to the boy?

(Maybe he could hold it in his mouth and swim back).

Picture Four

What is the dad doing? Why? (I think he's wiping the kite to get it dry.)

How does the boy feel now? Why? (He's probably happy to get his kite back.)

10. What does the boy have to remember when he's playing with the kite next time? ... *don't let go because it might fly away*.....

Oral Comprehension Profile

Level of response	No. of resp. (tally)
Phase 1	
Phase 2	
Phase 3	

Comprehension Level

Phase _____

Use the results of the analysis to assign a level on the relevant indicator from the Oral Language Profile.

Emergent	Early Developing	Developing
C4 May respond appropriately to concrete, literal questions, but experiences difficulty making predictions and inferences.	C4 Responses to questions are relevant and demonstrate the ability to make predictions and inferences directly based on information presented.	C4 Draws on general world knowledge to interpret information, going beyond presented information to make own predictions and inferences.


Now that you have completed the profiling for Baydon, check your analysis against the completed example in Appendix 4. If necessary, spend some time in resolving any differences between your analysis and that of the completed example.

Appendix 5 contains a transcription of a second Oral Comprehension task for you to analyse. This transcription comes from a pre-primary child, Ashleigh. You are encouraged to analyse her responses now. You will see, as you do so, that the responses are quite different from those of the year two student whose data you have just analysed. The completed analysis for Ashleigh's transcript is to be found in Appendix 6.


Analysing the data from the Narrative Production task

Analysing data from this task requires the teacher to make qualitative judgements about language produced by the child. These judgements are based on the indicators shown on the Oral Language Profile.

1. Mark with a highlighter pen any prompts that were used during the administration of the Narrative Production task.
2. Conduct a first scan of the narrative sample focusing on the content of the story. Assign the student a level on the Oral Language Profile for Points CO2, CO3 and CO4. If the student's performance on these indicators is inconsistent across the task, or the teacher has evidence of superior performance in other classroom contexts such as news-telling, the student may be assigned a transition level rating. Only assign a rating at a higher level if the child has well consolidated performance at this level. Do not assign a higher level if there is only evidence of emergent performance.

 The ways of organising text which are the basis for profiling these indicators are those which are found in Standard Australian English. Languages and dialects other than Standard Australian English may organise text in different ways. For children whose first language or dialect is not Standard Australian English, an emergent level of performance on these indicators may not reflect their ability to organise texts in 'home language ways'.

3. Conduct a second scan of the narrative sample focusing on the vocabulary and grammar. Assign the student a level on the Oral Language Profile for points LS1, LS2 and LS3. Apply the profiling guidelines outlined above.

 Each language and each dialect has a unique system of sounds and sentence structures. Using Standard Australian English as a criterion for 'correctness' in profiling points LS1 and LS2 means that children whose first language or first dialect is not Standard Australian English may be assigned an Emergent level. Interpretation of this finding should be made in light of the child's home language as the 'errors' may be characteristic of the dialect spoken in the home, or the result of the child retaining aspects of their first language while acquiring English. If you are unsure whether the child is producing errors, or simply using their first dialect, a comparison with the language produced by other children from the same cultural background may help you decide.