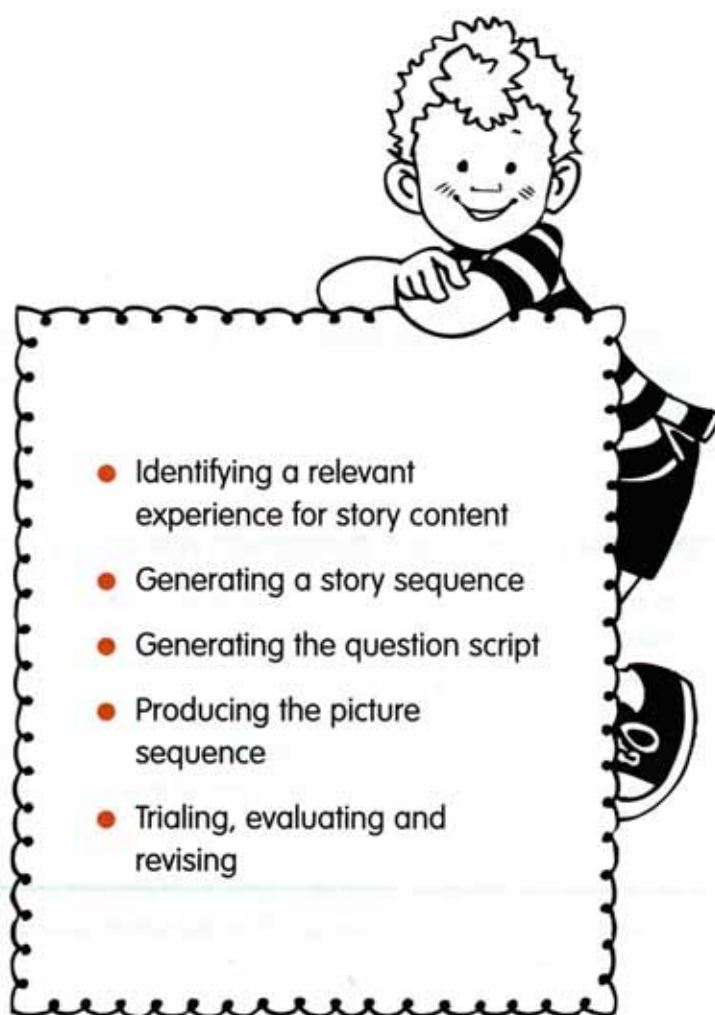



Section “C”

Modifying the Tasks for Use with Particular Cultural Groups



Section C

Modifying the Tasks for use with Particular Cultural Groups

 Understanding of language, and the ability to talk about events, is affected by familiarity with the events being discussed. When children have participated in events, and heard and used the language which occurs, they are able to use the experience to interpret and discuss similar events.

The events which form the basis of the Time for Talk sampling tasks are events which have been shown to be familiar to many children living in urban areas. However, they may be less familiar to children from remote or isolated areas or those from particular cultural groups. Sampling the language skills of these children using the 'Kite Story' or 'Lost Teddy' tasks may result in an underestimation of their ability. More reliable information may be obtained if the sampling tasks are modified to include events and situations which the children have experienced.

The aim of modifying the tasks is to sample language skills in the context of experiences which are familiar to the child. Task modification is a time consuming process. Schools will need to consider the number of children with whom the modified task will be used when deciding whether to undertake the modification process. Sharing the task of modification within a region or with neighbouring schools is recommended as a way of reducing time spent on this process.

This section provides a framework for modification of the assessment tasks, supported by an example showing how the profiling was modified for use with Aboriginal children living in a suburban area of Perth. A study which compared the performance of children using the modified task and the 'Kite Story' indicated that there was a tendency for Aboriginal children in pre-primary and Year 1 to respond at a higher level when using the modified task. Qualitative analysis suggested that the children were more motivated and more talkative when using the modified materials. The study therefore indicated that modification of the materials for use with Aboriginal children will result in a more valid estimation of their ability to use Standard Australian English, especially for children in the earliest years of schooling.

1. IDENTIFYING A RELEVANT EXPERIENCE FOR STORY CONTENT

In order to complete this step, consultation with representatives of the relevant cultural group is necessary. There may be members of the school staff who belong to this cultural group (for example, Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers - AIEWs), there may be a cultural or parent group which already exists in the school or community (for example, an Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness – ASSPA committee) or it may be necessary to ask a number of parents to be a part of an advisory group.

In the example given here, initial discussion involved an Aboriginal teacher and the two AIEWs who worked at the school. Their responses were then discussed at an ASSPA committee meeting.

The first task is to identify a situation which many of the children from the target cultural group are likely to have experienced and the parameters which characterise the situation (for example, participants, objects present, events likely to take place). Use the questionnaire reproduced below as a guide. You may rephrase, delete or add questions in order to suit particular needs and the situation which has been identified.

Questions to use in consultation with community members in modifying the sampling and profiling package

1. What sorts of things do _____ children at _____ most often do? (eg go fishing, play football ...)
2. Which one thing do you think MOST _____ children at _____ are MOST likely to have done lots of times?
3. Who are the other people there? What are they doing?
4. Where is the action likely to take place? (eg if fishing – river or ocean?)
5. What things are likely to be around? For example, if the activity is fishing, what type of fishing lines are used, what other things will be there? (eg buckets, rods, towels ...)
6. What sorts of things usually happen?
7. What problems could take place? (eg, if fishing, dog knocking something into the water.)
8. What could the people do to solve these problems?
9. What sorts of words might _____ children from _____, and their parents, use to talk about this? Do any of these words have special meanings? Can you explain the meanings?
10. Is there any other information about this activity that you think is important?

An example from the Perth Metropolitan area

*Questionnaire completed following consultation with community members

1. What sorts of things do Aboriginal children at GP Primary School (GPPS) most often do? (eg go fishing, play football)
Fishing, camping, football, basketball, on the oval, family gatherings – eg for funerals or to see a new baby.
2. What one thing do you think MOST Aboriginal children at GPPS are MOST likely to have done lots of times?
Fishing – a football game may be going on at the same time.
3. Who are the other people likely to be there? What will they be doing?
Extended family – grandparents, aunts, uncles, babies, dogs. Older people (eg father and grandfather) are likely to be fishing. Some kids might be fishing too – with their own handlines. Kids might be jumping into the water, or playing with a ball in the water. Grandmother and mother might be talking or playing cards.
4. Where is the action likely to take place? (eg if fishing – river or ocean?)
Foreshore – eg in Mandurah. Park by a river. Close to the beach. Fishing from either beach or jetty.
5. What things are likely to be around? For example, if the situation is fishing, what type of fishing lines will be used, will there be something to take the catch home in – what?, will there be food – if so, what?
Handlines for fishing. Might be a bucket to take fish home in (partly filled with water). Bait (in a plastic bag or wrapped in newspaper – octopus, prawns or mulies.) Knife to cut bait with. Esky. Food – bread (sliced in plastic bag), damper, chops / sausages to cook on BBQ, tomato sauce. Beer, coke, cordial in a plastic cordial bottle. Might be plastic cups, a blanket to sit on, towels, cards, football, cricket bat, tennis ball, bucket and spade.
6. What sorts of things are likely to happen?
Play football, eating, collecting shells.
7. What problems might take place? eg, if fishing, dog knocking something into the water.
Knocking bait into water, football hitting something (eg bait into water), fishing from beach – tide comes in and washes bucket out, little kid in the water – can't swim, football kicked into the water by little kid.
8. What might the people do to solve these problems?
Little kid can't get football back – big kid has to get it.
9. What sorts of words might Aboriginal children from GPPS, and their parents, use to talk about this activity? Would any of these words be hard for teachers to understand? If so, please explain their meaning.
ana – it's like asking a question, d'reckly – in a while, Noongar – Aboriginal people¹
10. Is there any other information about this situation that you think is important?

¹ When the task is used, children may include words which have not been identified at this stage. In this case, you are advised to enlist the help of the AIEW, or a member of the child's home cultural group, to help interpret what the child has said.

2. GENERATING A STORY SEQUENCE

Use the information you gained by talking with your advisory group to think of a story line which has a setting, a problem, an attempt to address the problem, a resolution of the problem, opportunity to evaluate character feelings, and an outcome which can be generalised. At the same time, you will need to think about the pictures which will represent the story.

When thinking about the story and the pictures, you will need:

- to be quite specific about the things that are to be included in the pictures and the actions which will be shown.
- to be selective – the pictures will need to remain simple enough for children to identify the necessary information and story line. In an Aboriginal example, the extended family may need to be a relatively small one – it may be difficult to include a large number of figures within the space available.

As you develop this story, further questions might occur to you. These will need to be discussed with your advisory group.

An example from the Perth Metropolitan area

First suggestions for the picture story

After discussion with the advisory group, it was decided that the story would focus on a family fishing outing where a football was accidentally kicked into the water and needed to be retrieved. The following ideas for the picture sequence were generated.

Picture 1

Extended family getting into car – probably a station wagon. Various adults, a number of children carrying (or in the back of the car) football, cricket bat / tennis ball, fishing gear (bucket, handlines), towels and food (in esky).

Picture 2

The same people at a park near the water. Some fishing from bank with hand lines. Bait wrapped in newspaper next to them, bucket for fish and knife on ground. Younger children (both boys and girls) kicking a football around close to the water. Older children in the background listening to music, talking. Adults sitting on towels: bread, coke, cordial in a plastic bottle on the ground.

Picture 3

The same setting as 2. The football has gone into the water and is floating out of reach. The little kids are looking at it – looking worried. An older female (probably the grandmother) is saying something to the little kids. The older children don't appear to have noticed what has happened to the football.

Picture 4

The same setting. An older child is coming out of the water, obviously wet, holding the football. The little kids look happy again. The adults are watching what is going on.

3. GENERATING A QUESTION SCRIPT

Develop a question script to accompany the pictures you have planned. This will form the basis of your judgements regarding the child's oral comprehension abilities. Remember, the purpose of the oral comprehension task is to investigate the child's ability to:

- deal with particular question types;
- describe people, objects and events;
- use talk to reflect on experience;
- interpret events from different points of view;
- understand cause-effect relationships;
- use language for critical thinking; and
- use world knowledge in the interpretation of information.

The question types and thinking skills which form the basis of this assessment are those which are commonly expected in the classroom and which are important in the development of literacy. For results from the assessment to be directly applicable to the classroom, it is recommended that the question forms and the dialogue which accompany the task be administered in Standard Australian English, by someone recognised by the children to be a speaker of *school language*.

The question forms provided in the "Kite Story" (Appendix 2) and "Lost Teddy" (Appendix 3) sampling tasks should be used as a guide to the development of questions to fit the situation and story selected. Remember that the question script should also contain supporting information. Taken together, the questions and supporting information serve as a basis for telling a story in the story production task.

The following outline provides information, based on the 'Kite Story' task, about the types of questions and supporting information (indicated in italics) to be included. The question types, and number of questions of each type, should be retained. The order of presentation of questions may be varied slightly, but should retain a sequence which is consistent with the sequence of story telling, *setting, problem, plan, attempt to carry out the plan, resolution, evaluation*.

Suggested sequence of questions

1. Setting, persons (ie who ...) *setting – identifying event*
2. Providing a reason given a negative stimulus (eg why aren't, how do you know they're not, why won't ...)
3. Explaining motivation (ie why ...)
4. Setting, place (ie where ...)
5. Prediction of action to follow (the problem element of the story) *identifying problem*
6. Providing a reason given a negative stimulus (eg why aren't, how do you know they're not, why won't ...)
- 7,8. Taking the perspective of a character in the story
9. Generating possible solutions to the problem
identifying and expanding the solution
identifying and explaining action
identifying and explaining character reaction
10. Providing an evaluation statement

You may find that further questions about the situation arise as you develop this script. You will need to discuss these with your advisory group.

An example from the Perth Metropolitan area

Suggestions for the picture story

In this example, the question script is integrated with description of the pictures. The information to be included in the picture is outlined first. The questions to go with each picture are in bold, and the supplementary questions in bold italic. Developing the script raised further questions which required consultation with the advisory group. These are indicated in italic.

Picture 1

Extended family getting into car – probably a station wagon. Adults, a number of children carrying (or in the back of the car) football, cricket bat / tennis ball, fishing gear (bucket, handlines), towels and food (in esky).

Questions

1. Who are these people?

What is the minimum number of people to include to give the idea of an extended family? Is it likely that children will identify the people as a family? Is there some other general term they might use?

Do you think they could be a family?

What do you think they're doing?

Would kids be likely to think they're going on a picnic? If not, what might they say? Is there a general term they might use to describe this type of outing?

2. Why aren't the kids at school?

3. Whose idea was it to go out? Why?

Picture 2

The same people at a park near the water (beach?). Some fishing from bank with handlines. Bait wrapped in newspaper next to them, bucket for fish and knife on ground. Younger children (both boys and girls) kicking a football around close to the water. Older children in the background listening to music, talking. Adults sitting on towels: bread, coke, cordial in a plastic bottle on the ground.

Questions

4. Where are they?

What are the little kids doing? (Looks like they're playing football)

5. What do you think is going to happen next? Why?

Picture 3

The same setting as 2. The football has gone into the water and is floating out of reach. The little kids are looking at it - looking worried. An older female (probably the grandmother) is saying something to the kids. The older children don't appear to have noticed what has happened to the football.

Questions

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

6. Why can't the kids get it out?
7. What is grandma saying to the kids?
How is she feeling?
8. Why aren't the others doing anything?
9. How could they get the ball back?

Picture 4

The same setting. An older child is coming out of the water, obviously wet, holding the football. The little kids look happy again. The adults are watching what is going on.

Questions

What's happening now? (Mm the big kid went in to get the football out of the water)

How do the kids feel now? Why? (they're probably happy to get the football back)

10. What do the kids have to remember when they're playing with the football next time?

Ask your advisory group for comments on the written question script, and for answers to any questions which may have arisen in developing the script.

Further consultation with the GPPS group indicated that:

- the car was likely to be a Holden;
- the extended family should at least contain parents, aunt or uncle;
- one grandparent as well as children of varying ages should be present; and
- the grandmother was likely to look concerned, not angry.

4. PRODUCING THE PICTURE SEQUENCE

Use the script you have developed to provide a detailed description of what needs to be included in each picture. Most of this information will be taken from your first outline of the pictures, but you will also need to include any further information that arose as a result of developing the question script.

Instructions regarding the size and medium of the pictures should also be included.

Then find someone to draw the pictures – a talented parent/caregiver or teaching assistant, an art teacher or, if sufficient funds are available, a professional artist.

An example from the Perth Metropolitan area

Story line information for the artist

Picture 1

Extended family getting into car – probably a Holden station wagon. Parents, other adults, at least one grandparent, younger and older children. They should be carrying (or loading into the back of the car) football, cricket bat / tennis ball, fishing gear (bucket, handlines), towels and food (in an esky).

Picture 2

The same people at a park near the water. Some fishing from bank with hand lines. Bait wrapped in newspaper next to them, bucket for fish and knife on ground. Younger children (both boys and girls) kicking a football around close to the water. Older children in the background maybe listening to music, talking. Adults sitting on towels: bread, coke, cordial in a plastic bottle on the ground.

Picture 3

The same setting as 2. The football has gone into the water and is floating out of reach. The little kids are looking at it – looking worried. An older female (probably the grandmother) is looking concerned and saying something to the kids. The older children and other adults don't appear to have noticed what has happened to the football.

Picture 4

The same setting. An older child is coming out of the water, obviously wet, holding the football. The little kids look happy again. The adults are watching what is going on.

*Note: Pictures are to be A4 size, in black and white so they can be photocopied.

The picture sequence produced after following this process ("The Football" story) is included in Appendix 8.

5. TRIALING, EVALUATING AND REVISING

Seek community comment on both pictures and questions. Modify these if appropriate. Some compromise will probably be needed - you are unlikely to come up with something which suits everyone. It is important to make sure that the pictures tell the story you wanted them to tell - inconsistencies between the pictures and the questions may cause problems.

Use the materials with a sample of children. Evaluate how well the materials accomplish their purpose. Look for problematic question forms and confusion arising from the pictures. Modify pictures and questions if necessary.