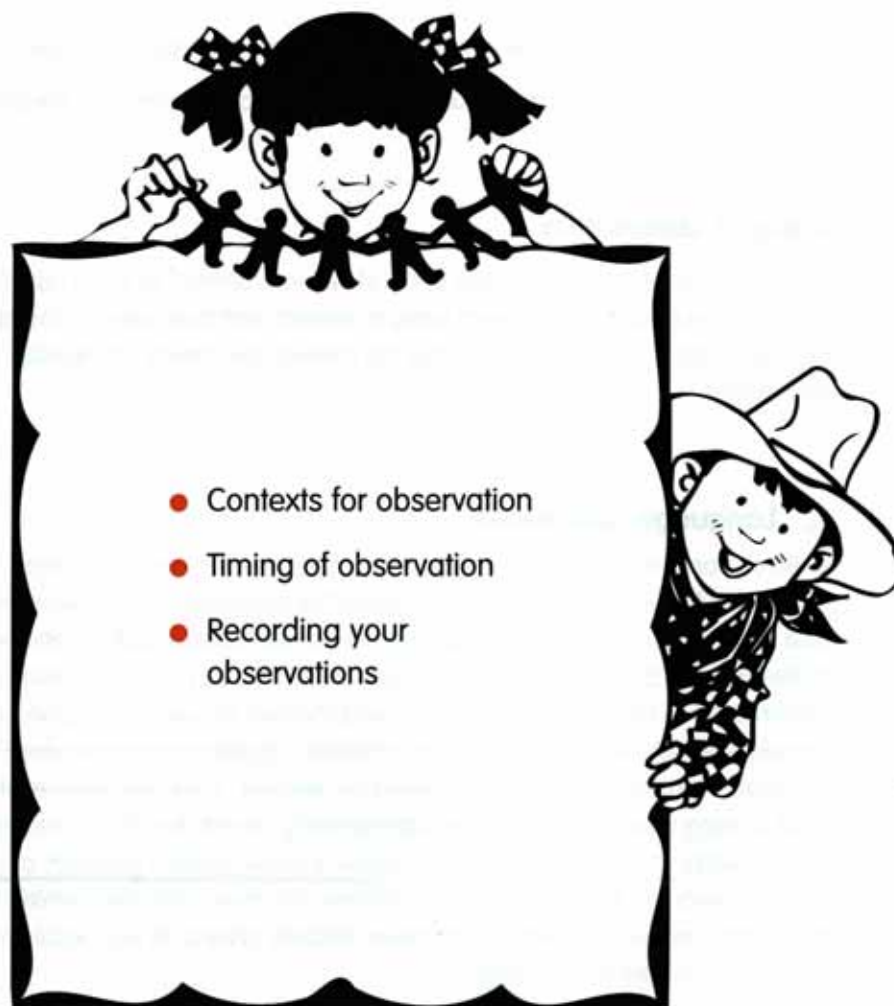


Section “D”

Monitoring Language Development in Four Year Old Children



Section D

Monitoring Language Development in Four Year Old Children

Task-based approaches to language sampling are difficult to use with children younger than pre-primary age. Children may be reluctant to participate, or may not understand the task requirements. For these reasons, it is recommended that evaluation of the language skills of children attending four year old pre-school is based on observation within classroom contexts. It is important that this observation and evaluation considers each child separately. A generally talkative, participating class may obscure the language characteristics of individual children.

Contexts for observation

The pre-school classroom provides many opportunities for observation of language skills. Observe children:

- as they interact in the home corner or playground;
- as they play alone in the home corner or playground;
- as they work with other children on puzzles, construction activities or while painting;
- at mat time; and
- in interaction with parents or caregivers as they arrive and leave the centre.

Valuable information can also be obtained through consultation with parents/caregivers.

Timing of observation

Children will need time to get used to the classroom context, to learn about the routines of the classroom and to start to learn ways to interact with their peers. Observation of language skills is best carried out once the children are clearly comfortable in the new environment.

Language differences

Children come to school with widely differing experiences with language. The vast majority will have considerable skill in using the language varieties they have heard and spoken at home. For many children, these home language varieties will be different to the Standard Australian English which is used in most school settings. Observation of the language skills of young children should be sensitive to the language variety with which the child is familiar. Judgements which use Standard Australian English as the criterion should be avoided. If you are unsure whether the child is using their home language appropriately, consult the child's parents/caregiver(s) first, an AIEW or member of the child's home cultural group if possible, or an ESL resource person. A small number of children may have difficulty learning both home and school language varieties. For these children, referral to your local speech pathologist should be a priority.

Recording your observations

Record your observations using the checklist provided in Appendix 10. Use your judgement to decide whether the child *often displays* the characteristic (if so, tick the "yes" box) or *seldom / never displays* the characteristic when there is opportunity to do so (tick the "no" box). If you consider the child has had *no opportunity to display* the characteristic, tick the "not observed" box.

