DEVELOPING A TOOLKIT FOR ASSESSING CHILDREN’S SPOKEN LANGUAGE SKILLS IN THE CLASSROOM

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What are the spoken language skills that schools should be helping children to develop? How can teachers monitor and assess these skills in a classroom setting?

We will report on a project, funded by the Educational Endowment Foundation (EEF), in which we are researching and developing a toolkit for Year 7 teachers to use in the classroom to assess children’s oracy. The aim is to enable teachers to assess students’ skills in using spoken English, across a range of settings, as they arrive in secondary school at the start of year 7, so as to help plan any support or teaching needed to develop those skills. The toolkit will also include tasks which will enable teachers to monitor how well students improve on these skills through the school year. It is designed for use with any students in mainstream classrooms.

The toolkit consists of several linked items:

- a set of initial tasks;
- a set of curriculum embedded assessment-for-learning (AfL) tasks;
- a set of end of year tasks;
- a system for assessing performance on these tasks and giving feedback to the children.

The toolkit is flexible to allow teachers to use any or all of the AfL tasks at any points in the school year, with any number of children.

The assessment scheme is skills-based and is grounded in our skills framework for oracy which we have developed using available existing resources and research, and in consultation with a range of academic and professional experts.

We have trialled the tasks and assessment schemes with a sample of children in three schools and we will report on the results of these trials, showing skills ratings, video and interview data. We will also discuss issues of validity, reliability and manageability that have arisen during the research and development.

Our principal project school (School 21 in London) has an oracy-led curriculum, which is also being developed through funding from the EEF. One designated application of our toolkit is to provide a measure of the effectiveness of that oracy curriculum. We hope, though, that it will have much wider use when fully developed as a formative assessment toolkit.