

Kris Kiesel  
CIL 510 Assessment of Language Minority Students  
Oral Language Assessment - April 25, 2007  
Instructor Tamara Marrah

### ***Student Background Information***

Sophie is seven-years-old and in the first grade at Blank Elementary School in a northwest Chicago suburb. She was born in Poland and moved to the United States shortly before entering Kindergarten. She lives with both parents and a one-year-old brother. According to the school district's Home Language Survey, the family speaks Polish at home; however, the parents noted that they can help Sophie with her homework in English. Sophie also attends Polish school on Saturday morning.

Sophie has been at North School since the beginning of Kindergarten. She has no previous school experience. Basically, she had no English when she started school. She has been in the ELL program since she entered Kindergarten and is serviced part-time under the push-in model. She is an average to high-average student, and she is very diligent and conscientious. Sophie's English Proficiency Level is in the Developing stage. She is outgoing with her peers, but somewhat reserved around teachers.

### ***Rationale or Purpose of the Assessment Situation***

Prior to starting a math unit on money, the purpose of this assessment was to determine Sophie's academic language about money, especially with regards to pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. This is also a pre-assessment for an upcoming unit on money.

This assessment is connected to the following Illinois State Mathematics Standards: State Goal 7.A.1c: Identify and describe the relative values and relationships among coins and solve addition and subtraction problems using currency.

This assessment is also connected to WIDA English Language Proficiency Standard 3: English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Mathematics. In the Speaking Domain – Engage in oral communication in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes and audiences.

### ***Description of the Assessment Situation***

I asked Sophie if she would help me with a "project" during her lunch recess. I wanted this assessment to be free of interruptions. Sophie had lunch and then came back into the classroom. We worked together during her noon recess period in our classroom. She sat at a student desk and I sat next to her. I sat in a student seat so I would be at her level. As soon as she sat down in her seat I placed some money on the desk. We worked with the money throughout our twenty-minute session.

### ***Explanation of the Assessment Measure***

The prompt used was money in various denominations. The denominations were as follows: 12 pennies, 2 nickels, 3 dimes, and 3 quarters. Some of the coins were heads up and some were tails up. I also placed 1 one-dollar bill on the desk. In addition, I used a picture of a bag of m & m's which had been cut out of a magazine and mounted on construction paper, that had 29¢ written on it. The prompts were used to assess Sophie's academic language in the following areas:

1. Did Sophie have mathematical vocabulary such as money, coins, cents, value, count, equal, penny, nickel, dime, quarter, dollar, heads, and tails?
2. Did she understand the value of the money?
3. Did Sophie comprehend what money is used for “in the real world”?
4. Did Sophie know the meaning of the symbol ¢?
4. Did she understand the concept of making a purchase?

***Copy of the Assessment Measure***

Photocopies of the money and the picture I used with the assessment are included at the end of this report.

***Transcription of the Student’s Oral Sample***

The following dialogue took place on Thursday, April 12 between Sophie and Mrs. Kiesel.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Hi, Sophie

*Sophie:* Hi, Mrs. Kiesel

(Coins are scattered on the desk. There is also one dollar bill.)

*Mrs. Kiesel:* What do you see here?

*Sophie:* Money

*Mrs. Kiesel:* You see money?

*Sophie:* Yes.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* What kind of money?

*Sophie:* Dollar, quarter. (Sophie is not pointing.)

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Do you know any of the other names?

*Sophie:* Dime.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Good!

*Sophie:* Penny, 10 cents.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Is there anything else you see?

*Sophie:* I don’t know the names.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* So can you touch the money and tell me which is which?

*Sophie:* Penny (pointing to penny), dollar (pointing to the bill), 10 cents (pointing to the dime).

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Do you know another name for this one besides 10 cents?

(Sophie looks puzzled.)

*Mrs. Kiesel:* (Repeating) Do you know another name for this one besides 10 cents?

*Sophie:* I can’t remember.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Okay. Do you know this one? (pointing to nickel)

*Sophie:* A dime?

*Mrs. Kiesel:* That’s a dime? Okay.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Do you know the name for this one? (pointing to quarter)

(There is a hesitation of about 15 seconds).

*Mrs. Kiesel:* It’s okay if you don’t know the name.

*Sophie:* (She points to a nickel.) That one’s a quarter and this one (pointing to quarter) is a dime.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* (Repeats while she points.) Oh this one’s a quarter and this one’s a dime?

*Sophie:* Shakes her head yes.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Do you know the value of each one? Do you know how much money each one is worth?

(Sophie looks a bit quizzical, so I rephrase.)

*Mrs. Kiesel:* If you were going to the store and if someone told you that something cost 25 cents, would you know which one to give him? (I reassure Sophie, as she looks somewhat uncomfortable.) You really aren't expected to know this.

(Sophie shakes her head no.)

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Okay, what about 10 cents? Would you know which one is 10 cents?

*Sophie:* (She immediately points to the dime.) This one.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Good. How about 1 cent? Do you know which one is worth 1 cent?

(Sophie points to the penny.)

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Right, what about 5 cents?

*Sophie:* That one? (pointing to the nickel)

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Good! Do you know how much that one is worth? (pointing to the dollar)

*Sophie:* One dollar.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Good. Okay, if you looked at these two do they look the same? (points to two dimes; one with heads and one with tails)

*Sophie:* (Quietly; she seems unsure.) Yes.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Okay, do you know which one is showing the heads and which one is showing the tails? Have you ever heard about that when you were talking about money?

*Sophie:* (Shaking head) No.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* (Pointing to coins) You said that these were all called money. Do you know another name for all of these?

*Sophie:* Quarters?

*Mrs. Kiesel:* They're all called quarters?

*Sophie:* No.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Do you know if there's a name for all of them together?

*Sophie:* No.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* What are some of the things you use money for?

*Sophie:* To buy stuff.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Okay, Like what kind of stuff?

*Sophie:* Umm, food and clothes. A couch and a T.V.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Good. Do you save any money? Do you have a piggy bank or something?

*Sophie:* Yeah, I have a bank.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Do you ever save money in it? Like if you get money, do you ever save it?

*Sophie:* Yes.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Where do you get the money from?

*Sophie:* Sometimes my dad gives me some, sometimes my mom.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Do you get it for doing chores, or do they just give it to you as a gift?

*Sophie:* For doing chores.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Okay, would you know how to count any of this money together?

*Sophie:* I can count two.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Which two?

(Sophie points to dime and three pennies that are together on the desk.)

*Sophie:* Ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen as she points to the coins.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* So you can add the 10 cents and the pennies. That's good. Could you do this one and this one? (points to nickel and penny)

*Sophie:* Umm . . . Shakes head no.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* That's okay. You know what we're going to be doing next in math? Money. So by you doing this with me, it will help me know what I need to teach the class. So you know some of their names – dollar, quarter, 10 cents, penny? Who taught you how to count money? Was it your mom or your dad?

*Sophie:* My mom and my dad.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* (Pointing to penny) Could you count 100 of these?

*Sophie:* (Shakes head) Yes.

*Mrs. Kiesel:* (Shows picture of M&M with the price 29¢ sign) Do you know what this says?

*Sophie:* I don't know what this is. (pointing to ¢ symbol)

*Mrs. Kiesel:* You've never seen that before? That means cents. Would you know how much money you would need to buy this? Could you show me with this?

(Sophie hesitates.)

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Do you need more of something?

*Sophie:* (Shakes head yes) I need more.

(Mrs. Kiesel places more pennies on the desk.)

(Sophie quietly counts from two dimes 20 cents and then 9 for 29.)

*Mrs. Kiesel:* Wow – good job! Sophie, thank you so much for helping me with this project. I really appreciate it.

***Standards of Performance***

I used the SOLOM Teacher Observation Student Oral Language Observation Matrix.

***Student's Actual Scores on this Assessment***

Sophie received the following scores on the SOLOM Oral Language Observation Matrix.

Comprehension	4	Understands nearly everything at normal speed although occasional repetition may be necessary.
Fluency	3	Speech in everyday conversation and classroom discussions frequently disrupted by the student's search for the correct manner of expression.
Vocabulary	3	Student frequently uses the wrong words; conversation somewhat limited because of inadequate vocabulary.
Pronunciation	5	Pronunciation and intonation approximate that of a native speaker.
Grammar	4	Occasionally makes grammatical and/or word-order errors which do not obscure meaning.

***Student's Other Related Assessments***

Sophie's ACCESS test scores from 2007 were not available. In spring of 2006 her proficiency level in the area of oral language was 1.9 within the range of 1.0 and 6.0. The

majority of her scores on the Illinois Snapshot of Early Literacy (ISEL), which were administered in April 2007, were between the 20%ile and 50%ile. She was below the 20%ile in vocabulary and reading fluency.

I conducted an oral interview with Sophie as another form of assessment. I asked, "What did you do all day yesterday? Tell me what you did from the time you got up until you got to bed." Her initial answer was, "I played ball outside with my friends." I had to prompt her in order for her to talk more about what she did on the previous day. If I would assess this oral interview using the Solom matrix, the scores would be quite consistent to the original assessment, indicating reliability.

Since Sophie is in my classroom, some of my assessments are based on teacher observation. As far as her pronunciation, I never have difficulty understanding her. Only occasionally do I find her making grammatical errors and that is usually in the area of verb tense. It definitely does not affect the meaning of what she is saying. Her vocabulary is slightly below average for an ELL student, but I think it has more of an effect on her reading than her oral language. With regards to fluency, she speaks at a normal speed, but I think that her volume is sometimes low because she lacks confidence and is afraid that she is going to give the "wrong answer." Sophie is relatively strong in her listening comprehension because she is always able to follow directions in class.

Since this oral language assessment was in the subject area of mathematics, it is important to note that Sophie does very well in the area of mathematics, usually scoring 100% on all her tests. She has good background knowledge in this area.

### *Analysis*

The rationale for Sophie's scores on the Solom Oral Language matrix follow.

First, Sophie scored a 4 in the area of comprehension because she understood almost everything I asked her to do. I repeated myself or reworded my directions on a few occasions, but it was because she lacked the necessary vocabulary to understand my direction. For instance, when I asked her the value of the coins she didn't respond, but when I said, "If you were going to the store and if someone told you that something cost 25 cents would you know which one to give him?" she understood what I was asking her, even though she didn't know the appropriate answer. Sophie also had excellent background knowledge regarding buying things, saving money, and earning.

In the area of fluency, Sophie's score was 3. She did not frequently search for the correct expression; therefore, her part of the conversation was not considered fluent. In fact, there were a few instances when she would use gestures, such as a nod or pointing, instead of responding with words.

Sophie's vocabulary score was also a 3. Although she appeared to be familiar with many of the coins' names, she got confused regarding their value. She also changed her mind several times when she was asked to name the specific coins; at times it appeared that she was guessing. Sophie did not recognize the terms "heads" or "tails" and she never referred to the coins as "coins." She also seemed to have difficulty with the meaning of the words "value" and "worth."

Sophie earned a 5 in the area of pronunciation because everything she said was clear. There were no signs of an accent and her intonation was that of a native speaker.

In the area of grammar, Sophie scored a 4. There was one instance where she said, "My dad gave me some." I noticed that she didn't always add the plural endings to words that

should be plural. Also, because she said things like, “Yeah” and “Umm” and because I am aware of her oral daily language, I believe a 4 in grammar is an appropriate measure.

### ***Evaluation***

Sophie’s academic oral language is above average for a first grade ELL student who has not even been in this country for two years. The fact that her lowest score on the Solom Matrix was a 3 is quite impressive. Her level of comprehension suggests that she has good background knowledge. Sophie stated that her parents taught her about money and how to count it, indicative of a strong L1 at home. Her scores of 4 and 5 in pronunciation and grammar also suggest a strong L1.

Sophie needs to strengthen her vocabulary. One of the reasons she may be lower in this area is because English is not spoken at home so the academic vocabulary in English is not reinforced. Since she is a first grader, there is much room for growth. It is my opinion that her vocabulary level affects her fluency. I also believe that she sometimes hesitates because she is unsure of herself. She also speaks quite softly in an academic setting, another sign of her tentativeness. Since she is a very conscientious student, she is afraid of making errors. As her L2 grows, her confidence will improve and she will become more fluent in her oral language.

### ***Recommendations for Instruction***

Several recommendations can be made to achieve Sophie’s academic language in the content area of money, which she is currently studying in first grade. Many of these recommendations are applicable to Sophie’s entire class of first graders, especially the ELL students.

1. Hands-on activities with actual coins will be most helpful. As Sophie learns about each coin, she should be able to see it, touch it, and compare it to the other coins. This will also help develop vocabulary in the content area. Sophie should also be given the opportunity to talk about the coins and describe them. Activities such as Round Robin or Say Something can be used.
2. As Sophie learns the values of coins and how to count sets of coins, she should use real coins or plastic replicas. This is more authentic than using pictures or “paper” money.
3. A math word wall containing the words money, coins, cents, value, count, equal, penny, nickel, dime, quarter, dollar, heads, and tails would be an asset. The words should have a picture next to them.
4. Sophie, as well as her classmates, will make a coin book, which is teacher-created. Students will do a shared reading and fill in the blanks, pertaining to each coin. They will be able to examine the coins as they complete each page. Students will color and cut out replicates of coins and glue them on the page. There will be a heads and tails side to help them recognize heads and tails. For example the penny page reads:  
\_\_\_\_\_ is on the front of the penny.

The color of the penny is \_\_\_\_\_.

The value of the penny is \_\_\_\_\_.

It would take \_\_\_\_\_ pennies to make \$1.00.

When these books are completed, they should be read using choral reading, partner reading, etc. They should also be taken home and read at home.

5. Each student will write a riddle about coins. Students can either describe a coin or write riddles about a group of coins, such as: We add up to 11. What two coins are we? This integrates math and writing. As students read the riddles aloud, all areas of oral language are being developed.
6. The teacher should integrate reading with math by using books like *Dollars and Cents for Harriet* by Betsy and Giulio Maestro, *Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday* by Judith Viorst, and *Our Garage Sale* by Anne Rockwell. Coins can be used to model what occurs in the stories. Listening comprehension is also developed through read-alouds. Sophie can do retells after hearing the books.
7. Setting up a pretend store with actual items or pictures with prices and directing students how to make purchases is another recommendation. Sophie will actively engage in conversation as she is “buying.”
8. In order for students to differentiate between heads and tails, students can flip coins and tally or graph the results. Sophie will also discuss the results to develop fluency, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.
9. Sophie should continue in the ELL program with assistance being pushed-in. Sophie will have the opportunity to work in a regular education classroom that is literacy-rich.

It is also important that Sophie’s parents are encouraged to do hands-on activities with her at home. She can count change in her parents’ pockets or coin purses. Sophie is an example of a student who has benefited from her parents involvement. It is also valuable for Sophie to speak Polish at home, so she does not lose her L1.