

## **eLIPS 2: Development and validation of an observational tool for examining early language in play settings with two-year-olds.**

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### **Abstract**

Early support for children at risk of developmental language delay and disorders can alleviate the impact of language difficulties on the child's later social development and academic achievement (Young et al., 2002; Dale et al., 2003; Duff et al., 2015). However, the challenges in identifying children for support in the early years are considerable (Dockrell and Marshall, 2015). To address this issue, an observational measure of child language, Early Language in Play Settings (eLIPS), was previously developed in collaboration with education practitioners for use in nursery settings with children aged 3-5-years (Duncan et al., 2020). This poster reports on the development and testing of an extension of this tool to be used with 2-year-olds. The study addresses the question of whether observations of play can capture language development at this young age to reliably distinguish pragmatic, expressive and receptive language skills.

Fifty children (Male=29) aged 24-36 mos (M=30) were assessed in their nurseries using:

- eLIPS 2 (pragmatics, receptive language, expressive language)
- Preschool Language Scales 5 UK (auditory comprehension, expressive communication)
- Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development 3 (Cognitive Scale)
- CELF Preschool-2 Descriptive Pragmatics Profile

Comparison of scores showed good concurrent validity between eLIPS 2 and the standardised language assessments, comparable with the levels of the eLIPS 3-5 version. Investigation of internal consistency demonstrated eLIPS 2 is a reliable tool for use by researchers and early years educators, and high inter-rater reliability across these groups has been found.

Two additional patterns of results have been found. The correlation between tests was significantly stronger for expressive ( $r=.84$ ,  $p<.001$ ) than for receptive language ( $r=.66$ ,  $p<.001$ ), highlighting the challenges inherent in observational assessment of understanding at early stages of development. Furthermore, eLIPS 2 revealed performance differences across children from differing socio-economic settings, confirming previous findings (cf. Pace et al., 2017), and suggesting that eLIPS 2 might be particularly helpful for identifying and describing the nature of poverty-related language delay. We conclude that the eLIPS 2 tool has potential to assist early years educators in understanding individual patterns of language acquisition and identify early language support needs among two-year-olds.