The Development of an Inuktitut and English Language Screening Tool in Nunavut

Abstract
One of the challenges of providing speech and language pathology services to Indigenous communities is the lack of culturally appropriate screening and assessment tools. This paper describes the process used in the development of the Inuktitut and English Language Screening Tool intended for use in the Qikiqtani region of Nunavut, Canada. The project involved collaboration among teachers and the speech-language pathologist from Qikiqtani School Operations, a university faculty member, and several speech-language pathology students. The development of the instrument was informed by the social context and the features of the Indigenous language Inuktitut, and an understanding of ways to evaluate local language screening instruments.

Élaboration d’un outil de dépistage des compétences en inuktitut et en anglais au Nunavut

Abrégé
La difficulté d’offrir des services d’orthophonie à des communautés autochtones repose en partie sur le manque d’outils de dépistage et d’évaluation adaptés à la culture. Le présent article décrit l’élaboration de l’Inuktitut and English Language Screening Tool (outil de dépistage de l’évaluation du langage inuktitut et en anglais) destiné aux Opérations scolaires de la région Qikiqtani du Nunavut, au Canada. Cette initiative a demandé une collaboration entre les enseignants et l’orthophoniste des Opérations scolaires de la région Qikiqtani, un professeur d’université et plusieurs étudiants en orthophonie. L’élaboration de cet outil s’est faite à partir du contexte social et des caractéristiques de l’inuktitut et a aussi tenu compte des façons d’évaluer les outils de dépistage locaux.
Working as a speech-language pathologist in Indigenous communities presents many challenges. One of these is the valid assessment of a child’s language skills. Tests and assessment methods that have been developed for use with English or French speaking monolingual children are not appropriate and their use can lead to inaccurate judgments about a child’s language abilities (Ball, 2007; Kohnert, 2008; Silliman, Wilkinson, & Brea-Spahn, 2004). However, linguistically and culturally valid assessment tools are rarely, if ever, available. One solution to this problem is to develop a test locally. In her report on language and literacy development among young Canadian Aboriginal children, Ball (2007) recommends “the development of valid, reliable screening and diagnostic assessment tools in relevant languages” (p. 55) as an important step to support the provision of effective, culturally appropriate speech and language services. There may be further advantages to these assessment tools. McGroarty, Beck and Butler (1995) and Jones and Campbell Nangari (2008) argue that an accurate assessment of oral language skills may also raise the status of the Aboriginal language by formalizing the skill, help protect an endangered language, and improve the focus on and quality of educational programming and language teaching methods.

The purpose of this article is to describe the process used to develop an early elementary language screening tool which was intended for use in the Qikiqtani region of Nunavut, Canada. The project involved collaboration among teachers and the speech-language pathologist from Qikiqtani School Operations, a university faculty member, and several speech-language pathology students. The development of the instrument was informed by the social context and the features of the Inuit language Inuktitut, and an understanding of ways to evaluate local language screening instruments (Ball, 2007).

THE QIKIQTANI CONTEXT

Nunavut was founded in 1999 when the former Northwest Territories were divided into two. The culture is based on the Thule civilization, nomadic hunters who travelled by dogsled and kayak (Crago, Allen, & Hough-Eyamie, 1997). The communities have embraced modern technology, but traditional practices remain strong. The official languages of Nunavut are Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun (a dialect of Inuktitut spoken in western Nunavut), French and English. The official vision is of a “fully functional bilingual society, in Inuktitut and English…” by the year 2020 (Government of Nunavut, 2000). Although Inuktitut is one of the few Aboriginal languages in North America regarded as having a chance of long-term survival (Norris, 2007), recent census data showed a slight reduction in the number of people who identified Inuktitut as their mother tongue as well as the percentage of Inuit who used the language in the home (Statistics Canada, 2008).

The Qikiqtani region comprises the eastern third of Nunavut including Baffin Island, with a population of nearly 16,000. The 13 communities in the region vary in terms of their size and language influence from the South. Most communities have fewer than 1,500 residents, the vast majority of whom are Inuit. Across the region, Inuktitut is the language of the home in over 80% of households (Statistics Canada, 2006). Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut, has some unique features. It is larger, being a community of just over 6,000 inhabitants, and it has the largest proportion of non-Inuit residents (ca. 40%; Statistics Canada, 2006). Language loss is a particular concern in Iqaluit. In contrast to other communities in the region where the percentage of Inuit is much higher (90+%), more English (and to a lesser extent French) is spoken in Iqaluit. For example, according to the 2006 Aboriginal People’s Survey, 49% of the Inuit population of Iqaluit reported using Inuktitut all or most of the time at home (a decrease from 64% during the 2001 census), as compared to 95% in the more remote hamlet of Arctic Bay (Statistics Canada, 2006).

An early foundation in Inuktitut instruction has been found to have an important positive impact on the development of academic language skills in Inuktitut and English (Wright, Taylor, & Macarthur, 2000), and in most communities in the Qikiqtani region, schooling is conducted mainly in Inuktitut until at least Grade 4. The Inuit teachers of these classes are native speakers of Inuktitut, strongly embedded in their community and culture. Most are graduates from the Nunavut Teacher Education Program, while some possess formal teaching qualifications from southern institutions. From Grade 4 onwards, classes are generally taught by English-speaking teachers from the South, although there continue to be classes delivered in Inuktitut. The system in Iqaluit is different. There, programs in Inuktitut, English and French are offered from Kindergarten onwards, with classes in English as a second language offered where appropriate from Grade 1 on. Regardless of the initial language of instruction, English is increasingly used as the language of education as the student reaches upper elementary, middle and high school. In Iqaluit, as elsewhere, students are also exposed to English in the community and in the media (Allen, 2007).

FEATURES OF INUKTITUT

Inuktitut has a number of features that differenti-
makes it from many other languages, making devising an evaluation challenging. As described by Crago and Allen (1998), the most striking characteristic is the high degree of polysynthesis, a language process in which affixes are added to a base to communicate meaning. Inuktitut permits ten or more affixes to be added to a single base morpheme. Each affix can alter the meaning of the base by acting as an adjective, adverb, participle, preposition or other, while also inflecting the base. As a result, it is possible to communicate the meaning of an entire English sentence in a single word (Crago & Allen, 1998). For example, the Inuktitut word “qangataasukkuiminuuriaqalaantuq” (in Roman orthography “qangatasuukkuimmuuriaqalaantung”) is the equivalent of “I’ll have to go to the airport” in English. Affixation in Inuktitut poses a challenge when studying the acquisition of the language; it becomes difficult to tell when each affix is understood to be a separate morpheme, as opposed to the group of morphemes being simply understood as a whole (Crago et al., 1997). Although the active voice is predominant, the passive voice is acquired and used earlier in Inuktitut compared to English (Allen & Crago, 1996). In addition, there are several levels of temporal reference including recent past, yesterday past, and same day past (Swift & Allen, 2002). Unlike English, future tense marking is acquired before past tense (Swift, 2004).

In a series of ethnographic studies during the 1980s and early 1990s in the Nunavik region of Northern Quebec, Crago and her colleagues noted significant differences in the traditional language socialization experiences of Inuit children when compared to those of Euro-Americans. Young children were often raised in multi-aged homes in which their early vocalizations were not interpreted as communicative and child care routines took place in silence (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004). Caregivers used imitation routines, greetings rituals and a “baby talk” register that included special “baby” and loving words (Crago, Annahatak, & Ninguiuuruvik, 1993, Genesee et al., 2004). Inuit mothers rarely labelled items or expanded their children’s utterances, and typically did not ask their children to display their knowledge by answering questions. Adult-child interactions frequently consisted of directives, and adults preferred their children to be quiet, attentive and not to initiate conversation with adults (Crago, et al., 1993, Crago et al., 1997). However, Crago and colleagues also noted differences in the interactions between younger Inuit mothers and their children. They used fewer of the traditional baby talk practices, and instead used more questions, requests for labelling, recounting experiences, and ‘repeat after me’ formulas (Crago et al., 1993, Crago & Allen, 1998, Pesco & Crago, 2008). Older mothers in the studies evaluated their children’s level of language based on their comprehension of increasingly long instructions, although interestingly younger mothers measured progress by their children’s expressive language (Crago et al. 1993).

DEVELOPING A CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE EVALUATION

When designing assessments for Indigenous communities, Gould (2008) notes “the need to work with and understand the relationship between culture and language” (p. 196). In what is termed the language socialization approach, language and culture are seen as interwoven, and children’s language development is viewed in a community context (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1996; Pesco & Crago, 2008). The beliefs and values of a culture affect the interactions and experiences of the community’s children. These include whether child talk, questions and verbal displays of knowledge are valued and encouraged, who may initiate or direct conversations, who carries the burden of understanding, and whether the behaviours of young children are interpreted as intentional communication (van Kleeck, 1994). To the extent that such practices differ from the practices of a school culture, Aboriginal children attending school can be considered to be negotiating multiple “worlds”, including home/school and different languages (Pesco & Crago, 2008). The assessment situation itself may be an unfamiliar context that affects performance (Carter et al., 2005).

Those who have developed Indigenous language assessment tools advocate a focus on receptive language skills, as evaluation of production may underestimate language competence, especially in shy children (Jones & Campbell Nangari, 2008; McGroarty et al., 1995). Jones and Campbell Nangari (2008) suggest “act out” tasks in which children perform actions in response to verbal commands, answering questions and picture selection as particularly suitable for language comprehension assessment. Culturally appropriate pictures and objects, starting with easier tasks, and providing demonstrations are also recommended (Carter et al. 2005; Jones & Campbell Nangari, 2008). This focus on receptive skills parallels the perspective of older, and presumably more traditional, mothers described by Crago and her colleagues (Crago et al., 1993).

EVALUATING A LOCAL SCREENING INSTRUMENT

In developing a local screening instrument, cultural, linguistic and content validity are important constructs, but a formal assessment of an instrument’s statistical properties is also desirable (McGroarty et al., 1995).
It is sometimes not possible to do a full evaluation of psychometric properties such as reliability, validity, and sensitivity. This is particularly true when working with a relatively small population. McCauley (2001) recommends a minimum of 50 participants per age group for standardized tools. If no sufficiently large population is available for testing, there are alternative ways to gauge a proposed instrument’s usefulness and appropriateness as a screening instrument of a particular skill. McCauley (2001) describes various ways to evaluate assessment instruments. For instance, reliability can be assessed using test–retest reliability, inter-rater reliability, or measures of internal consistency such as split-half reliability.

Validity can also be assessed in a number of ways. Content validity can be assessed by having experts review the items to determine their relevance. When working with culturally or linguistically distinct communities, including Inuit communities, it is important that cultural informants, native speakers of the language, be used as experts to ensure linguistic and cultural appropriateness. Item analyses examine how each test item performs. Point biserial correlations can be used to determine the extent to which individuals’ performance on a given item reflects their performance on the whole test. For example, individuals who achieved a high score on the test would be expected to respond correctly to a specific item more often than individuals who scored poorly on the test. Performance on specific test items can also be used to order them in terms of difficulty and to remove or reword items which do not differentiate students. For example, an item which all pass or which none pass would not differentiate the students. It is also important to establish construct validity. This entails showing that performance on the instrument relates to the construct (i.e., language) as expected. For instance, it would be expected that older children would perform better than younger children. There may also be groups for which there is a prediction of differences (e.g., those with typical development versus those with language impairments, or those from communities where the Indigenous language is considered strong versus those where it is considered weak). A final type of validity is criterion-referenced. Typically, this is established by correlating children’s performance on the new instrument with an established one. With Inuit and other minority groups, an appropriate comparison test is not available generally. However, it is possible to correlate performance on the new instrument with teacher ratings or some other judgement of the children’s performance.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INUKTITUT AND ENGLISH SCREENING TOOL

The genesis for the development of a culturally appropriate Inuktitut and English early elementary screening tool for use in the Qikiqtani region of Nunavut came from several different stakeholders. Inuit and non-Inuit teachers in Iqaluit were concerned about the quantity and quality of oral language skills of children entering the Inuktitut and English Kindergarten programs and noted that students who were weaker in their first language, whether Inuktitut or another language, were later having difficulty with Inuktitut and English literacy and academic skills. Such observations are in keeping with a relationship between oral and written language that has been well established in studies of English-speaking children (Stothard, Snowling, Bishop, Chipchase, & Kaplan 1998; Catts, Fey, Zhang, & Tomblin, 2001). Inuit teachers in particular reported that incoming students were not as fluent in Inuktitut as they had been in the past. Teachers and administrators were also interested in knowing the relative strength of Inuktitut or English in students, so parents could make informed decisions about the language of schooling and education staff could provide appropriate educational supports, such as special Kindergarten language classes, immersion educational approaches and/or referrals to speech language pathology services. In addition, the speech-language pathologist involved with the project was interested in developing some local norms, so that children with speech and language impairments could be identified with more confidence. As a screening tool, the assessment needed to be a reliable and valid measure of oral language development, as well as quick and straightforward for teachers and support personnel to administer.

Several language screening tools already existed for Inuktitut-speaking children. The first was an undated “Screening of Speech and Language” that consisted of a culturally appropriate toy- and picture-based assessment with different tasks described for each of the grades from Kindergarten to Grade 3, and which formed part of a “Speech and Language Kit” of therapy materials originally produced by the Baffin Divisional Board of Education. Although the screening was available in every Nunavut school, it was rarely used, due to its length, complexity, and lack of norms or criteria to interpret the results. The Ages and Stages Parent Questionnaire (Bricker et al., 1999) had been translated into Inuktitut in the Nunavut community of Igloolik, but conversations with elders and others suggested that the focus on colour names, sentence length and morphemes, etc. was inappropriate given Inuit language structure and child-rearing priorities. With their input and traditional knowledge, a more culturally appropriate adaptation had been made. However, the revised communication section of the questionnaire included several items on written language, thinking, and fine motor skills rather than simply oral communication.
skills. Again, no norms or criteria for interpretation were available. The third was a research-based Inuktitut-English-French language assessment, developed in the Nunavik region of Northern Quebec (Wright et al., 2000). According to the study’s authors, the evaluation took approximately 45 minutes to deliver in one language. It focused on vocabulary, especially school-based items such as colours, shapes, and letters/syllabics with little emphasis on other aspects of receptive and expressive language. In summary, none of the existing tools appeared to fit the desired criteria for a culturally appropriate, quick, easily administered, reliable and valid assessment of Inuktitut and English oral language skills.

As a result, the development of an in-house screening tool was begun. Native Inuktitut-speaking teachers and non-Inuit staff from elementary schools in Iqaluit, all with several decades of teaching experience in the North, met with the first author, a speech-language pathologist who had worked in Qikiqtani schools for four years, to discuss the ways one could identify a strength or weakness in the Inuit language and how this could be assessed in an appropriate fashion. In addition, published reports detailing the features of Inuktitut, including the grammar and morphology were reviewed, as well as the available literature on language development in Inuktitut and the language socialization experiences of Inuit children (e.g. Allen & Crago, 1996, Crago & Allen, 1998; Crago et al., 1993; Swift, 2004; Swift & Allen, 2002).

Potential screening items were developed by the first author based on this research and discussion. The items were reviewed by the screening development team to ensure that they were culturally relevant and changes were made as needed. For example, receptive language items which possessed different meanings in different Inuktitut dialects, were changed. Several picture stimuli were modified or replaced when cultural informants stated that they were not prototypical images from an Inuit perspective. The Inuktitut for the screening items was checked and translated from English into Inuktitut with input from several cultural informants. When there were disagreements, discussions were held until consensus was reached. Because one goal was to evaluate relative language strength in Inuktitut and English, a parallel assessment was subsequently developed in English, using different items, but evaluating similar language skills (e.g. negatives, following instructions, question words, etc.). Materials, including objects and pictures, were selected to be familiar and appropriate to northern students (Jones & Campbell Nangari, 2008; McGroarty et al., 1995). Test administration instructions were written in both Inuktitut and English.

THE SCREENING TOOL

The Inuktitut and English Language Screening Tool consists of four components reflecting language assessment tasks suggested by Inuit language socialization studies and published reports from clinicians and researchers who have developed oral language screenings with other Indigenous communities (Crago et al., 1993; Carter et al. 2005, Jones & Campbell Nangari, 2008; McGroarty et al., 1995). The first section, Following Directions, evaluates the student’s ability, after a demonstration, to follow six instructions. This requires the comprehension of increasingly long instructions containing spatial concepts using common objects such as a cup, toy dog and shoe. The task reflects the way older Inuit mothers judge language development (Crago et al., 1993) and requires “acting out,” as suggested by Jones and Campbell Nangari (2008). Pictures of the desired outcomes of the instructions are provided after each instruction has been responded to, so that students can self-correct and be successful, whether or not they understand the verbal command. The second section, Comprehension of Affixes/Sentences, assesses the student’s oral comprehension of grammar, basic concepts and affixes, an important feature of Inuktitut. The 25 items consist of a choice of four pictures about which the administrator reads a phrase or question. For example, “e7u6 xa+/aJ6 wk1j5” (transliteration “nunuqjuaq”) targets the basic concept of attribute-object, “big bear”. In contrast, “qimmiq angujaangujuq inungmut”; “the dog is followed by the person”) screens for an understanding of passive sentences. Pictures for this section were designed to be culturally relevant for communities in the region, and were created using material from several electronic picture libraries. Such picture selection tasks are also suggested by Jones and Campbell Nangari (2008). The third section, Picture Naming, assesses the student’s expressive vocabulary by having them label 18 pictures of nouns and verbs, initially ordered from easy to difficult based on the perceived order of difficulty from the perspective of a northern child (Carter et al., 2005). The final section of the initial version of the screening tool was an informal language sample and rating. The tester recorded the student’s five longest sentences produced during a story retelling task supported by pictures. The stories were about themes familiar to children in the Baffin region. The examiner rated the child’s quantity of speech, vocabulary, and grammar skills compared to children of the same age, using a five-point scale. Narratives have been recommended as a less biased method of language assessment for bilingual children (Laing & Kamhi, 2003; Peña, Summers, & Resendiz, 2007; Rojas & Iglesia, 2009). In this screening, the children’s sentences were examined for vocabulary and
sentence structure but not for narrative structure skills, which would have required a fuller transcription of the child’s utterances and more complex coding.

ADMINISTRATION

Five examiners were trained in the screening administration by the speech-language pathologist and teachers involved in the project. It usually took about 45-60 minutes to describe the procedure and scoring, and to give demonstrations of the screening administration. In addition, new administrators were observed during the first few screenings to ensure that they delivered them consistently. Eventually, the two elementary schools in Iqaluit screened almost all incoming Kindergarten students and those entering Grade 1, resulting in a total of about 150 students. The majority of the children received both the Inuktitut and English versions, although when a child spoke only one language based on parental report, just one version was administered. In order to provide a measure of validity, the students’ classroom teachers were asked to provide a separate rating of strong, average or weak for the students’ oral language development in the language of instruction.

Providing an example of the community-university research partnerships recommended by Ball (2007), the results of these first administrations of the screening were analysed by students of Speech-Language Pathology at Dalhousie University under the supervision of the second author. Specifically, the reliability and validity of the screening test were assessed. The story retell subtest was not included in the analysis because of concerns about the language samples and ratings obtained. The examiners expressed uneasiness about their ability to be consistent in the ratings. They also reported that some children seemed “too shy” or were otherwise reluctant to speak. This is in keeping with Gould (2008), who found that this type of picture-supported story retelling was an ineffective method of eliciting language samples from Australian Indigenous children. She hypothesized that this was due to differences in the purpose of Aboriginal storytelling, such as the apparent futility of telling a story to somebody who already knew it.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Significant correlations were found between the remaining subtests in both the Inuktitut and English versions indicating that the subtests were indeed measuring a common construct (i.e., language). An item analysis was used to determine the relative difficulty of the items and if all items performed as expected. Validity was demonstrated in two ways. In both languages, it was found that the children’s screening scores were correlated with their teacher’s independent ratings of their language skills. The tests were developmentally sensitive in that children entering Grade 1 performed better than those entering Kindergarten. Finally, it was found that for those children who were screened in both Inuktitut and English, the vast majority performed better on the English version. This raised the concern that the Inuktitut and English versions of the screening test might not have been equivalent in difficulty, or that the tasks did not adequately assess language competency and development in Inuktitut. Alternatively, the lower scores in Inuktitut might have reflected Inuktitut language loss in Iqaluit. The observation that children newly arrived from more remote communities where little English was spoken performed very well on the Inuktitut screening provided some tentative initial evidence that the second possibility was more likely.

Based on statistical examinations and conversations with the staff at the schools, certain changes were made to the screening tool. These included changes to some of the picture stimuli, a reordering of subtests based on the performance of the students, and the removal of items which did not appear to contribute to the overall result. Equivalent items were removed from both English and Inuktitut versions. The major change was the addition of a sentence repetition section to replace the story retell task. As previously noted, the examiners had expressed serious concerns about the reliability and validity of the language samples obtained from the story retell and their ability to rate the samples consistently. For the sentence repetition task, Inuktitut sentences of increasing length and complexity were adapted from a sentence repetition task devised by Inuit special education teachers of the Kativik School Board in Nunavik, Quebec. The sentence content was evaluated and deemed appropriate by cultural informants from the Qikiqtani region of Nunavut. The sentences were modified to reflect the different dialects of Inuktitut in the area, and an English version of the sentences was developed.

In general, school staff reported that the screenings were straightforward and took about 20 minutes to administer to a student. The results proved helpful in identifying students with language and/or learning difficulties, and students who might need extra support or immersion educational approaches. The screening also flagged students for a follow-up with Speech and Language services, which are a very limited resource in the region. Most parents were interested in participating and receiving the results, and were at times surprised by their child’s strength or weakness in a particular language.

During the second and third years of the project, the original versions of the screening test were readministered
to about sixty of the same students in Iqaluit as part of an end of year assessment by the school. The analyses revealed that the children received statistically higher scores a year later. Thus, the sensitivity to development that had been shown cross-sectionally was confirmed using a longitudinal sample. In addition, the Inuktitut screening tool was administered by school staff to a total of about eighty children in Kindergarten and Grade 1 in three remote communities where the Inuit language is used more frequently in daily life: Kimmirut, Arctic Bay, and Clyde River. Since there were concerns about whether the screening adequately assessed language skill in Inuktitut, we were particularly interested in determining how children who lived in more remote hamlets would perform on the Inuktitut version. As expected, the students in these three smaller communities performed much better on the Inuktitut screening than their peers in Iqaluit, suggesting that the screening measured differences in language development in Inuktitut. Construct validity was confirmed as children in Grade 1 performed better than those in Kindergarten. Subsequent evaluations have replicated this finding with cross-sectional data.

CONCLUSIONS

We have described the process of the development of the Inuktitut and English Language Screening Tool. Our aim was to develop a culturally appropriate language screening tool for use in the Qikiqtani region of Nunavut. The screening test needed to be quick and easy to administer so staff could deliver it reliably and independently. Qualitatively, school staff reported that it fulfilled these characteristics and that it has been useful for a variety of purposes in Qikiqtani schools. Administrators and clinicians in other parts of Nunavut have expressed interest in adapting it for local needs and norming. Quantitatively, analyses demonstrated that the screening is developmentally sensitive as shown both cross-sectionally and longitudinally. The correlation between the children's scores and teacher ratings of language ability provided additional evidence of validity, as did the fact that performance on the Inuktitut screening conformed to predicted community differences, and incidentally provided tentative evidence about Inuktitut language loss in Iqaluit.

The development of such a screening tool continues to be a work in progress, as screenings in different communities are used to develop local norms and to suggest changes to the assessment itself. In one community, for example, a teacher administered the Inuktitut and English Language Screening Tool to all the students from Kindergarten to Grade 3. Analyses of the results from these four classes suggested that the screening results were not informative after the Grade 2 level, confirming the informal opinion of the project team on this subject and resulting in the request for an adaptation for use with older age groups. Several schools in the region regularly use the screening to identify incoming students for referral for oral language assessment, to provide information to parents and teachers about the oral language skills of students, to measure progress and to help guide decisions about support, including language classes, as well as referrals to other services. In Iqaluit, the results prompted reflection on the need for a different educational approach, one that incorporated principles of immersion education, to be used with students who were entering Kindergarten without fluency in the language of instruction. Other schools have been less interested in screening entire classes, due in part to time constraints and/or lack of resources and knowledge about how to help those identified. The first author regularly uses the screening as part of her evaluations in Nunavut schools, and where there has been interest, provides training and resources about how to help students who are identified as having weaknesses in one or both languages. In some schools, language groups have been organized to allow additional opportunities to develop oral language skills in Inuktitut.

Despite these successes, there are limitations to this tool, which should be kept in mind. As a screening, the tool is not a comprehensive assessment of oral language skill and care must be taken to ensure that it is not used as such. Specifically, evaluation of a child's language use in naturalistic contexts such as conversational or narrative samples would be an important part of a comprehensive assessment. Given the lack of alternative tools, there is a danger that the screening may be used with older students with whom it lacks validity, or to make major decisions about changing a student's primary language of instruction, which requires a more holistic evaluation of the student and the educational environment. The screening may not adequately reflect the inter-community differences in the region. For example, tasks and materials that are appropriate for a traditional community, such as a seal-hunting topic, may not be familiar to students living in Iqaluit. Changes have been made to the Inuktitut versions to reflect local dialectal differences. The simple pass/fail scoring may miss relevant features in the student's response. Finally, on a practical level, as the tool is used in more communities and as the school staff changes, it is difficult to monitor administration of the tool. Examiners may not always achieve or maintain consistency in their delivery and scoring.

There are a number of factors that helped to make this endeavour successful. One was the serendipitous identification of the need for a screening tool by different
stakeholders, including teachers, the speech-language pathologist, and administrators, all of whom were willing to give time, energy and even financial support to the project. Native speakers of Inuktitut were involved from the beginning of the process to ensure the cultural and linguistic appropriateness of the tool. A university faculty member and speech-language pathology students were willing to work on evaluating the tool's properties. The opportunity to participate in the development of this clinical tool allowed the students to apply their knowledge of principles of assessment and working with linguistically diverse populations in a 'real world' context. By working collaboratively and being mindful of the goals and perspectives of all partners, the development of the Inuktitut and English Language Screening Tool has proved to be a valuable experience for all parties involved.

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