Structured Photographic Expressive Language Test-
Third Edition
(SPELT-3)

Publisher/Date:

Purpose:
- Individually-administered and norm-referenced measure to identify morphologic- and syntactic difficulties in children, ages 4-00 to 9-11.

Provides:
- Analysis of Morphological structures (preposition, plural, possessive noun and pronoun, subjective pronoun, direct/indirect object, present progressive aspect, regular and irregular past tense, modal auxiliaries, contractible/uncontractible copula, and contractible/uncontractible auxiliary) and Syntactic structures (negative, conjoined sentences, “wh” question, interrogative reversal, negative infinitive phrase, propositional complement, relative clause, and front/center embedded subordinate clause and the relative clause).

Standardization Issues:
- Norms included 1,580 children from 20 states representing four major geographic US regions. Demographics included, and were matched for, language impaired children (about 7%) and SES based on mother’s educational-level. Individual cell sizes by age group were adequate (exceeding 200+ children per cell).

Reliability and Validity Issues:
- Median test internal-consistency reliability of .86 was good, spanning an acceptable range of .76 to .92. Test-Retest reliability (56 children, median interval of 11 days) was .94. Interrater reliability was strong (.97-.99). Concurrent validity was demonstrated with the CASL, suggesting substantial overlap between the measures (.78). Content validity was reported by high correlation in items with the Index of Productive Syntax as well as review of existing research. Construct validity was reported through demonstration of age-and-score parallels.

Additional Points:
- The test’s structure and focus may allow for more comprehensive analysis of morphology and syntax that may not occur in the course of spontaneous language samples.
• The manual includes a new chapter and guidelines for scoring, devoted to African American English structures. Included are research-based response variations that are acceptable for speakers of AAE (African American English).

• Independent research study published in 2005 by Perona, et al, of the SPELT-3 confirmed the test’s accuracy in differentiating between children with language impairments and children with normal language development, and in fact, their study of 85 children found 90% sensitivity and 100% specificity levels in differentiating the two groups when using a relatively high cut-off standard score of 95.

• Stimulus pictures have been updated to reflect a more current and non-biased ethnic representation.

• New test items were incorporated for the assessment of more complex language structures. More information on prompting is outlined, as well.

• African Americans and Caucasians in the norming sample closely matched US Census data, however, Hispanic children were slightly underrepresented, and there was a slight overrepresentation of the “Other” ethnicity category.

• The addition of 7% language-impaired children in the new norms corrects a “criticism” of the test’s predecessor which did not include this population. Exclusion of this demographic “could” have resulted in over-identification of children with language impairment.

• Appropriate cautions and care should be applied when using this measure with English Language Learners.