

DH launches first language assessment tool for Cantonese-speaking preschool children (with photos)

The Department of Health (DH) today (December 5) launched the Hong Kong Test of Preschool Oral Language (Cantonese) (TOPOL). The test is the first locally developed and comprehensive spoken language assessment instrument for Cantonese. Designed for use on Hong Kong Cantonese-speaking preschool children between the ages of 2 years and 6 months and 5 years and 11 months, the test will enable speech therapists to provide a more accurate diagnosis for local children with language development disorders.

Local speech therapists have been using adapted overseas assessment tools for assessing Hong Kong's Cantonese-speaking preschool children in the past decades. The newly launched TOPOL, which caters for the needs of local Cantonese-speaking preschool children, will enable evidence-based assessment of Hong Kong children's language development and its disorders, contributing to quality clinical services and providing a platform for future research.

TOPOL was developed by a multi-disciplinary team of the DH's Child Assessment Service (CAS) together with senior academic scholars of the Academic Unit of Human Communication, Development, and Information Sciences of the Faculty of Education of the University of Hong Kong, the Department of Applied Social Sciences of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and the Department of Linguistics and Modern Language Studies of the Education University of Hong Kong, and renowned experts in research methodology from the institutions. Research for the project started in 2013.

Having undergone stringent development procedures, TOPOL was normed on a widely stratified sample of Cantonese-speaking preschool children recruited from nurseries and kindergartens across 18 districts in Hong Kong. The tool provides information on a child's profile across language domains and modalities as well as directions for further criterion-referenced language assessment.

TOPOL is intended to be used by Cantonese-speaking individuals who have received professional qualifications as speech therapists from recognised university programmes and who possess a background in Cantonese linguistics. It is applicable to professionals working in the public sector, as well as those from non-government organisations and the private sector. The DH today held a seminar to introduce TOPOL for the local speech therapy sector.

TOPOL will be sold to eligible users at \$5,440 per set. Interested speech therapists may visit the CAS website (www.dhcas.gov.hk) for details.

