

**Webquest assignment for Language and Communication Disorders
SPE 3323, Spring 2012**

Introduction

Proper language development has been linked to the ability to become competent in reading and writing. The ability to detect possible language disorders early in a child's development can lead to identifying other related disorders and facilitate early intervention. You are asked to observe language interaction more closely than you ever have before, by collecting a language sample from a child of 36-60 months old. You will record the length of utterances, evaluate them for meaning, and summarize your findings.

Task

Collect and analyze a language sample of a child between the ages of 3 to 5. In order to complete this task you must:

1. Record and transcribe 25 utterances from a child between the ages of 36 to 60 months of age
2. Calculate the MLU (mean length of utterance) for the sample
3. Identification of the child's current stage of development according to Brown's Stages of Language Development, and
4. Write a summary of your evaluation

Process

Examples are provided below.

1. Through play, questioning, or child initiated conversation record 25 utterances spoken by a child 3 to 5 years old. (36-no older than 60 months; child can be younger but his language sample will be more challenging to evaluate). You may use a third person to interact with the child while you record. You must record utterances through writing or tape recorder at the time of contact.
2. Transcribe the utterances of your subject, as spoken. Don't correct, change, or in any way modify. Remember utterances from young children are often going to be grammatically incorrect. Type each utterance in numbered list form.
3. Count the number of morphemes in each sentence and note the total of words, syllables, and morphemes under each sentence.

Morpheme

A morpheme is a unit of meaning. It does not necessarily relate to the "word count" or "syllable count" of an utterance. Here is an example of the way morphemes are counted

in the words *happy, unhappy, unhappily, and unhappiest, and the sentence* '

Examples:

1. My ugly bothers picked on me this morning

8 words; 11 syllables; **10 morphemes**
(the word endings "s" and "ed" count as separate morphemes)

2. I go bye bye

4 words; 4 syllables; **3 morphemes**
(*bye bye* has one meaning)

3. He looks unhappy

3 words; 5 syllables; **5 morphemes**
("s" ending and "un" prefix have their own endings)

4. Once you have the total of morphemes for each utterance average the totals with the number of utterances (total of morphemes divided by 25) to find the MLU.

For example, using the utterances above, the MLU is $(10+3+5) \div 3 = 9$

5. Refer to Brown's Stages chart, which can be found through http://members.tripod.com/Caroline_Bowen/BrownsStages.htm web-site and find the current stage of development for the child by using the *Mean MLU* column. Use the *Morphological Structure* column to list characteristics the current stage.

6. Write a summary of the evaluation including the child's age in months, the current stage of development, characteristics of that stage, and why would you use this with a child exhibiting language difficulties and what strategies can be used to increase your subject's language development.

Resources

[Katherine speaking about why she likes PE](#)

This link will give you a language sample for practice.

[Answer Key to Katherine speech sample](#)

This link will provide you with a transcript of Katherine's speech and the MLU evaluation.

http://members.tripod.com/Caroline_Bowen/minisample.htm

Speech Language Pathology - information for families, and SLP students and professionals about voice, speech and language problems in children

http://members.tripod.com/Caroline_Bowen/BrownsStages.htm

This link discusses Brown's stage of language development

<http://www.indiana.edu/~sphss333/lisa/remtherules.html>

This link provides you with a short tutorial on how to calculate MLUs

http://www.momagen.com/language_development.html

Momagen.com is devoted to encouraging and training you to sign with the pre-verbal toddlers of the world and let them sign back.

http://www.colorado.edu/slhs/SLHS4560/5_syntax/mlu_practice.html

This link provides you with child language samples for MLU practice. Practice calculating MLU (mean length of utterance) with the following samples, taken from the CHILDES database. How do the results compare with what you would expect based on each child's age?

Rubric

Your project will receive ten points if you have::

- Your sample has 25 utterances (typed)
- Your MLU calculations are within 95% accuracy
- You correctly identify of your subject's current stage and characteristics
- Your summary includes reasonable strategies designed to increase your subject's language development

Your project will receive eight points if you have::

- Your sample has 25 utterances (typed)
- Your MLU calculations are within 90% accuracy
- You correctly identify of your subject's current stage and characteristics
- Your summary includes reasonable strategies designed to increase your subject's language development

Your project will receive six points if you have::

- Your sample has less than 25 utterances (typed)
- Your MLU calculations are within 80% accuracy
- You correctly identify of your subject's current stage, however, list inappropriate characteristics of that age
- Your summary includes questionable strategies designed to increase your subject's language development