Language Sample Assignment: Part A, Transcription and MLU Calculation

In pairs, students will transcribe a conversational play language sample from boy aged 3yr-3mos interacting with a familiar adult woman. Refer to the syllabus for the due date.

What to Transcribe

The transcript should be 50 child utterances in length. In your numbered 50 count, do not count when the child just says single-word yes/no responses. This means that if the child says a lot of just yes/no, you will still have 50 utterances with which to obtain a representative calculation of mean length of utterance and a good picture of the child’s language.

Both child and adult conversational partner utterances should be transcribed. You can leave out lengthy segments of adult conversation, but say that you did so (e.g., 5 min. of adult-adult conversation omitted). In sum, transcribe the full communicative event that falls between child utterance 1 and 50, including the yeah/no and the adult contributions.

The major decisions will be “What is the child saying?” and when to segment speaker turn into utterances (sentence). In deciding what the child is saying, write the words you think the child is saying. Do not change or correct grammar or word choice. If a word is difficult to understand, listen several times, and then if you can’t figure out the word, write an X for each syllable of the word.

This is an orthographic transcription of words not a phonetic transcription of speech sounds. You can note occasional sound errors (e.g., (says [wuv] for love)), or if there were a lot, make a comment about that and whether it was fairly easy or difficult to understand the child.

How to Transcribe

Start the transcript with the following information: the LSA team names, the participants’ names, the age and gender of the child, and the context (activities, materials, location), and the relationship between the conversants.

Put each child and adult utterance on a separate line. Number the child utterances. For each utterance, identify the bound grammatical morphemes that are in Brown’s 14. Use the layout displayed below (C = Child, A = Adult):

1. C Where are the book/s?
   A On the shelf.
2. C Can’t reach it {reaches for the shelf}.
3. C Get it for me.
   = Adult looks disapproving but says nothing.
4. C I want it!
   A Do you want it?
   C No.
   A You do.
   A What do you say?
   = Long pause, adult looking at child, child looking away
5. C Please.
   = Adult hands child the book
6. C Yay, my favorite XX.
7. C Can you read?
8. C My book {pats the cover}.
= Adult takes the book and starts reading it aloud

**Utterance Morphemes, MLU, Range**

You will be doing a lot more analysis in the next part of this assignment, but a basic skill is calculation of Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) by morphemes.

On the right side of the transcript, list the utterance length by morphemes for each of the 50 child utterances you use to calculate MLU. Calculate MLU on those 50 child utterances, following the rules set out in your notes. At the end of the transcript, report the utterance length range (shortest to longest) and the MLU.